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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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PHOTO: FREEPIK

Only 15 judges for 10 lakh people in India: Report

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

There are only 15 judges per 10 lakh population in the country. The vacancies in high courts stood at 33 per cent of the total sanctioned strength, the report claimed 21 per cent vacancies in 2025. The overall share of women judges in the district judiciary increased from 30 per cent in 2017 to 38.3 per cent, and it increased from 11.4 per cent to 14 per cent in the high courts in 2025. The report said Delhi district courts were among judicial branches with the lowest vacancies in the country with 11 per cent, and in which women comprised 45 per cent judges. *—PTI*

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In blow to Centre, Stalin starts panel on state autonomy

CHENNAI, 15 APRIL

Alleging that states' rights were gradually being snatched by the Centre, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday announced the constitution of a panel under a retired Supreme Court judge on state autonomy. Opposition AIADMK slammed the CM over the announcement, asking what his DMK that shared power with the Congress-led UPA earlier was doing all these years. The move was aimed at diverting public attention, the principal opposition party said.*—PTI*

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ED names Sonia, RaGa in ₹988 crore National Herald case

Cong cries vendetta, to protest near ED offices

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Enforcement Directorate (ED) filed a chargesheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi in the alleged laundering of Rs 988 crore in the National Herald case.

Congress has strongly denied the allegations, calling it "vendetta politics" and labelling the seizure of assets a "state-sponsored crime masquerading as the rule of law."

It has announced it will protest outside ED offices throughout the country.

The chargesheet, submitted on 9 April, also names Congress leaders Sam Pitroda and Suman Dubey, as well as Young Indian, Dotex Merchandise Pvt Ltd, and Sunil Bhandari as co-accused. Special Judge Vishal Gogne has posted the matter for further proceedings on 25 April and directed ED officials to produce case diaries for review.

Filed under Sections 3 and 4 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the complaint alleges that Sonia and Rahul Gandhi, as majority shareholders (38 per cent each) in Young Indian, acquired properties worth Rs 2,000 crore from Associated Journals Ltd (AJL) for a mere Rs 50 lakh. AJL publishes the National Herald newspaper and is now owned by Young Indian.

The ED claims the accused further generated proceeds of crime through bogus donations worth Rs 18 crore, fake advance rent of Rs 38 crore, and fictitious advertisements worth Rs 29 crore.

The ED claims the accused further generated proceeds of crime through bogus donations worth Rs 18 crore *PHOTO: PTI*

The court acknowledged the ED's plan to seek transfer of the predicate offence—relating to alleged cheating and criminal conspiracy—from another bench to ensure both it and the money laundering offence are tried together, as required under PMLA.

The ED stated on Saturday it had issued notices to take possession of Rs 661 crore worth of immovable assets attached.

The case originated from a 2014 private complaint by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy, who alleged a criminal conspiracy involving top Congress figures, including the late Motilal Vora and Oscar Fernandes.

The probe, which began in 2021, has been upheld by both the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court, allowing investigations to proceed.

The court has asked the ED to submit a soft copy of the complaint in OCR format and properly paginate the documents before the next hearing. *—PTI*

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NO RELIEF FOR CM

Court orders Lokayukta to continue MUDA case probe

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

A special court for people's representatives here on Tuesday deferred its order on a petition filed by ED against the 'B Report' filed by the Karnataka Lokayukta police in the MUDA land allotment case.

The report has cleared Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of wrongdoing. However, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the complainant, activist Snehamaayi Krishna, have filed objections challenging the report and demanded a deeper probe.

The court also granted the Lokayukta police permission to continue its investigation, following a request made by the agency.

During the hearing, the presiding judge Santosh Gajanan Bhat stated that a decision on the B Report would be taken only after the Lokayukta police submits a complete investigation report.

As a result, the court adjourned the proceedings and posted the next hearing for 7 May.

Earlier, the Mysuru division of the Lokayukta police had submitted an initial report based on its inquiry into allegations against Siddaramaiah and three others.

However, the court observed that the investigation should not be limited to just four individuals and directed the police to probe all those involved and file a comprehensive report.

The case pertains to alleged irregularities in the allotment of sites by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), in which Siddaramaiah has been accused of misusing his position.

The allegations suggest that residential sites were allotted in violation of norms and procedures, potentially benefiting certain individuals, including Siddaramaiah's family members.

A 'B Report'—essentially a closure report indicating no evidence of wrongdoing—was later filed, stating there was no sufficient material to prosecute the accused. *—PTI*

Retail inflation dips to 6-year low of 3.34%

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Retail inflation in India has fallen to a nearly six-year low of 3.34 per cent in March 2025, attributed to a decrease in prices of vegetables and protein-rich items. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate was recorded at 3.61 per cent in February and 4.85 per cent in March 2024, marking the lowest rate since August 2019, when it stood at 3.28 per cent. Food inflation also eased to 2.69 per cent in March compared to 3.75 per cent the previous month and a significant 8.52 per cent a year ago.

In response to the easing inflation, the Reserve Bank of India recently reduced the key short-term lending rate (repo) by 25 basis points. The central bank has forecasted CPI inflation for the 2025-26 fiscal year at 4 per cent, with quarterly projections indicating a gradual increase through the year.

Meanwhile, wholesale price inflation has also decreased, falling to 2.05 per cent in March, down from 2.38 per cent in February. Year-on-year, it was 0.26 per cent in March 2024. The industry ministry noted that the positive inflation rate is primarily due to increased prices in food products, other manufacturing sectors, food articles, and electricity. Notably, food inflation in the wholesale index eased to 1.57 per cent, driven by a significant deflation of 15.88 per cent in vegetable prices during March. However, inflation in manufactured products increased to 3.07 per cent, and fuel and power saw a rise to 0.20 per cent. *—PTI*

Wholesale price inflation has also decreased, falling to

2.05

per cent in March.

Intel report blames Bangladeshis for Murshidabad riots

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Bangladeshi radicals, allegedly aided by local leaders of a political party, were "involved" in the recent violence triggered by anti-Waqf law agitations in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, according to an Intel report, sources said.

Sources said members of two Bangladesh-based radical outfits Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) were allegedly involved in the violence in Murshidabad, which left three persons dead.

The Union home ministry is closely following the situation in Murshidabad, where central forces have been deployed along with the state police to restore peace and maintain law and order, sources said. The Border Security Force (BSF), which is deployed along the India-Bangladesh border, has also been instructed to keep a strict vigil so that illegal infiltration does not take place in the West Bengal sector, the sources said.

On 12 April, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan held a virtual meeting with the chief secretary and DGP of West Bengal after large-scale violence led to loss of lives in Murshidabad district. Centre asked the state government to keep a close watch on the other sensitive districts and put in place adequate steps to ensure normalcy at the earliest. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

SC raps HC for shaming rape survivor

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

The Supreme Court of India has expressed strong disapproval of recent comments made by the Allahabad High Court in a rape case, wherein the complainant was reportedly stated to have "invited trouble" by going to the accused's house while intoxicated. Justice BR Gavai remarked that judges must exercise caution in their language, especially when deciding bail applications.

The remarks were made while the high court granted bail to an accused in a rape case, and the apex court took suo motu cognisance following the Chief Justice of India's notice. The Supreme Court also recently stayed another Allahabad High Court order implying that actions such as groping did not constitute an attempt to rape, labelling some observations in that ruling as "insensitive" and "inhumane."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta highlighted the importance of considering public perception in judicial remarks. The Supreme Court has adjourned the hearing in the suo motu case for four weeks. The Allahabad High Court's commentary has sparked outrage, raising concerns over victim-blaming in judicial proceedings and could have profound implications on how such cases are perceived and adjudicated in India. *—PTI*

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'HOSPITALS MUST LOSE LICENCE FOR TRAFFICKING'

In a decisive move to tackle the trafficking of newborns, the Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday, 15 April, that hospitals found complicit must face immediate licence suspension. The Court stressed that any case of newborn trafficking should not only entail penal repercussions but also regulatory actions, including the revocation of the hospital's operational licence. "If any newborn infant is trafficked from any hospital, the immediate action against the hospital should be suspension of licence," stated the bench comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan. The Court highlighted the critical duty of care hospitals have towards mothers and their newborns, condemning the recent bail granted to thirteen individuals accused of child trafficking in Uttar Pradesh. It chastised the state for its lack of seriousness in challenging these bail orders, calling out the Allahabad High Court for its "callous" approach. *—PTI*

FOR 2 YEARS

Convict makes threat calls from Parappana Agrahara jail

HAMEED ASHRAF

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

SALAR EXCLUSIVE

The Parappana Agrahara Central Prison, notorious for housing high-profile inmates and repeated security breaches, has landed in controversy once again—this time over a murder accused allegedly using a phone from within the jail to threaten his own family for nearly two years..

Sujay Bhargav, jailed since 2019 for the murder of Tumakuru's former mayor, is said to have repeatedly called his uncle, Surya Narayana, pressuring him to transfer ownership of a textile shop.

In one of the recorded calls submitted to authorities, Sujay allegedly warned: "You have kids, do not forget. Wait and watch what I can do to you and your family. I'm already branded as a criminal and will continue to be one. But you have a lot to lose. No police can help you."

The threats have reportedly escalated over the past two years, despite repeated police assurances.

"Earlier, he would call every few months. Now he's threatening to burn down my shop and harm my family more frequently," said Surya Narayana, speaking to **Salar News**.

The incident throws fresh light on persistent security failures at Parappana Agrahara, which has often made headlines for unauthorised phone use, contraband smuggling, and VIP treatment of inmates.

Accused Sujay Bhargav

- In 2024, viral photos showed murder accused and Kannada actor Darshan inside the prison, drinking coffee and smoking in jail.

In 2024, viral photos showed murder accused and Kannada actor Darshan inside the prison, drinking coffee and smoking with his manager Nagaraj and rowdy-sheeter Wilson Garden Naga. Despite public outrage, no action was taken against jail officials.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Prisons (Amendment) Bill, 2022, prescribes 3 to 5 years' imprisonment for possession or use of phones within prison premises. Yet, enforcement appears lax, rendering the law ineffective.

Phone jammers were installed at the prison, but they were so powerful that residents living nearby complained of poor signal, while inmates continued to use phones undeterred.

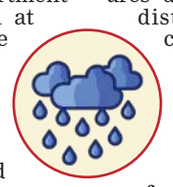
Former Bengaluru police commissioner Bhaskar told **Salar News**: "There is no political will to curb this, which is why it keeps happening. Everyone from jail officers to the Central Industrial Security Force may be in cahoots. Until there is iron-handed action—criminal prosecution of both inmates and complicit officers—this will remain just another piece of news."

He also called for top-down accountability: "The Home Minister must hold the DGP (Prisons) responsible. If criminals can run rackets from jail and threaten citizens, what hope is there for justice outside?" Furthermore, insiders allege that a thriving black market exists inside the prison, offering everything from narcotics to smartphones. *—Salar News*

India to get above-normal rain this SE monsoon

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

India is expected to receive above-normal rainfall during this year's southwest monsoon season, raising hopes for a strong agricultural performance in the largely agrarian economy. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast rainfall at 105 per cent of the long-period average (87 cm) for the June to September period, with a model error of ±5 per cent. While large parts of central and western India, including Marathwada and adjoining Telangana, are likely to see above-normal rainfall, regions such as Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, and the northeastern states may experience below-normal precipitation.



Of the three major climate drivers influencing the Indian monsoon—ENSO (El Niño–Southern Oscillation), the Indian Ocean Dipole, and Eurasian snow cover—two are expected to remain neutral, while low snow cover over Eurasia is expected to support rainfall. However, experts caution that overall rainfall figures do not ensure uniform distribution. Climate change is contributing to fewer rainy days and more extreme rainfall events, heightening the risk of floods and droughts.

The monsoon is vital for India's agricultural sector, which supports over 42 per cent of the population and contributes significantly to GDP. It also plays a crucial role in replenishing reservoirs for drinking water and hydroelectric power. A favourable monsoon forecast thus offers a much-needed boost amid ongoing heatwave conditions. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Goods train derails in Belagavi, services disrupted

BELAGAVI, 15 APRIL

Two wagons of a goods train derailed on Tuesday morning while entering Belagavi Railway Station, causing disruption to services on the route, railway authorities confirmed. No injuries or casualties were reported. The incident occurred on the track opposite the Military Mahadev Temple on Congress Road. The train was travelling towards Miraj in Maharashtra. An accident relief train was dispatched from Hubballi to assist with restoration, according to a statement from South Western Railway (SWR). Arrangements have been made for affected passengers at relevant stations. Senior SWR officials, including the General Manager, are monitoring the situation closely. Updates on service changes will be issued as needed. *—PTI*

Woman techie blackmailed with morphed photos

BENGALURU 15 APRIL

Cybercriminals allegedly hacked the email account of a 29-year-old woman software engineer residing in a hostel in Whitefield and demanded Rs 2.5 lakh after morphing her personal photos into obscene visuals. The Whitefield Cyber Crime Police have registered an FIR under relevant sections of the IT Act based on her complaint. Police say they are using technical tools to track the unknown accused. According to officials, the hackers used a Google Drive link and accessed the victim's private photos through phishing or malware, which were later edited into sexually explicit content which was then sent to her brother-in-law with a message demanding money. The blackmailer threatened to upload the content to adult websites if the woman failed to pay up. *—Salar News*

4 robbers held, jewellery worth Rs 22L recovered

BENGALURU 15 APRIL

Halasuru Gate Police, in four cases of jewellery theft arrested employees who stole gold and took flight with the stash, valued at Rs 22 lakh. In the first case, the Police traced the accused to Purba Bardhaman district in West Bengal where he had fled after a jeweller from Nagarathpet entrusted him with 247 grams of gold to craft ornaments. Police recovered 158 grams of gold worth Rs 13 lakh. Police arrested a worker from Kolar, entrusted with polishing the jewels and recovered gold worth Rs 2.16 lakh. A similar modus operandi emerged in a third case, Rs 2.7 lakh worth gold was recovered from a goldsmith who had fled to West Bengal. In a fourth incident, silver items weighing over 4 kg have been recovered from the suspect in in KP Agrahara after it went missing. *—Salar News*

Lorries were seen parked at the APMC Yard ground on Tuesday as part of a strike called by lorry owners' associations. The protest is aimed at pressing the State government to address several demands, including a reduction in diesel prices, removal of toll plazas on State highways and resolution of other long-standing issues affecting the transport sector; Sacks of onions pile up amid the strike **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Truckers' strike halts transport of goods

Truckers protest indefinitely against fuel price hike despite Transport Minister's appeal

BENGALURU 15 APRIL

Goods trucks across the State remained off the roads on Tuesday, as the Federation of Karnataka State Lorry Owners and Agents Association (FKSLOAA) began an indefinite strike protesting diesel price hikes, high toll charges, and alleged harassment at toll plazas.

Despite Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy's appeal and emergency talks, the association refused to budge without concrete action on its demands.

The truckers are demanding a rollback of the increased VAT on diesel up by Rs 5 per litre in the past nine months lower toll fees, an end to harassment by police and NBFCs, and withdrawal of fitness renewal fee hikes. They also oppose what they call unreasonable no-entry rules in Bengaluru, which disrupt timely deliveries.

The strike, backed by 69 organisations representing nearly 6 lakh lorry owners, agents, and drivers, has brought cargo movement within and into Karnataka to a standstill. Essential commodities such as milk, medicines, and vegetables are exempt, but transport of construction materials, cement, iron, and consumer goods has halted. Trucks remain idle across hubs including Yeshwanthpur APMC in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Davangere, Belagavi and Hubballi districts.

Minister Reddy, citing diesel price trends under the Centre, argued Karnataka still offers one of the lowest diesel rates in the South and urged truckers to resume operations in public interest. But strike leaders asserted the protest will continue unless core issues are addressed.

With disruptions in supply chains, prices of essential items are already showing signs of climbing, sparking fears of further inflation and trade impact if the deadlock persists. *—Salar News*

Angry Vokkaligas warn of protest against caste report

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

Vokkaligara Sangha Prez Kenchappa Gowda & DyCM DK Shivakumar

The Vokkaligara Sangha, the apex body representing the influential Vokkaliga community, has strongly opposed the recently submitted Socio-Economic and Educational Survey report—commonly referred to as the caste census—labelling it "unscientific" and biased. The Sangha has demanded that the Karnataka government reject the report and conduct a fresh, accurate survey.

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, Sangha President Kenchappa Gowda said the community would unite with others who felt similarly aggrieved—including the Veerashaiva-Lingayats and Brahmins—and launch a massive agitation if the state proceeds with implementing the report.

"We will not remain silent. If the report is implemented, our community and others will join hands for a statewide protest," Gowda warned, adding that the Sangha is ready to lead a Karnataka bandh if needed.

The controversial report, prepared by the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, was submitted to the state cabinet on 11 April and will be further discussed in a special cabinet meeting scheduled for 17 April.

According to leaked figures, the survey estimates the Lingayat population at 66.35 lakh and the Vokkaliga population at 61.58 lakh—challenging traditional beliefs about their demographic strength and stirring political tensions. Several ministers from both communities are reportedly preparing to voice objections during the cabinet meeting.

"It has been ten years since the survey was conducted, and now we are being asked to accept its findings. This is injustice," said Gowda. "In many taluks, Vokkaligas alone number 1 to 1.5 lakh. If we're shown as the sixth-largest group, there is clear manipulation with political motives to favour certain communities and adjust reservation benefits accordingly."

The Sangha criticised the outdated data and called for a fresh survey aligned with standard norms, which require a decadal revision of census data by the Centre. "We're not against a caste census," Gowda clarified, "but this one is flawed and must not be implemented."

He also revealed that the Sangha had already developed its own software to independently survey the Vokkaliga population and would proceed with its own data collection if the state failed to act.

Sangha director Nelligere Babu added that the group had sent a strong message to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah: "The government will collapse if it tries to enforce this report."

Community leaders also urged Vokkaliga ministers and MLAs—particularly from the ruling Congress—to oppose the report publicly. "The community supported your political rise. If you stay silent now, we will protest against you," Gowda said. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who belongs to the Vokkaliga community, is expected to meet with Congress legislators from the community to discuss the report. Shivakumar had earlier co-signed a memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister, urging that the data be rejected. *—PTI*

NIA names 4 more accused in Praveen Nettaru's murder

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday chargesheeted four more accused, three of whom are absconding, for their alleged involvement in the brutal murder of State BJP leader Praveen Nettaru in 2022 by cadres of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI).

In its second supplementary charge sheet, NIA has charged Abdul Nasir, Naushad, Abdul Rahaman and Ateeq Ahmed.

With this, the total number of chargesheeted accused in the case has risen to 27, including six who are absconding.

Praveen Nettaru **PHOTO: PTI**

"Three of the four chargesheeted today are among the absconders. They have been identified as Abdul Nasir, Naushad and Abdul Rahaman," a statement issued by the probe agency said.

Nettaru, a BJP Yuva Morcha district executive committee member, was hacked to death by two motorcycle-borne assailants in Bellare village of Dakshina Kannada district in State on 26 July, 2022. According to the findings of the NIA investigation, Nasir, Naushad and Abdul Rahaman, had provided shelter to the three main assailants in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar and Erode district of Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

Caste census or census of hate: Kumaraswamy

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

Criticising the caste census report tabled before the State Cabinet, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Tuesday questioned whether it was a "caste census or a census of hate".

Kumaraswamy sought to know the population of Vokkaligas, the dominant agrarian community which he belongs to, in the state.

"What is it really, a caste census or a census of hate? Is this so-called census a conspiracy designed to instigate unrest in the state? Or is it merely a diversionary tactic to deflect attention from the embarrassment caused by relentless price hikes and a series of corruption scandals?" the minister asked.

"I do not support this report. I am fully prepared to fight against this injustice," the Minister added. *—PTI*

Hubballi encounter: HC orders autopsy of migrant

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

The Karnataka High Court has instructed the State government to carry out a post-mortem examination on Ritesh Kumar, a migrant labourer from Bihar, who was allegedly shot dead by police during an encounter in Hubballi on 13 April. Kumar was implicated in the murder of a five-year-old girl, with police claiming he was killed while attempting to escape custody.

A division bench, led by Chief Justice NV Anjaria and Justice KV Aravind, issued the directive during a hearing of a petition filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Karnataka. The Court stressed the importance of adhering to the Supreme Court's established guidelines on police-related deaths.

The bench specified that the post-mortem must be conducted by two medical professionals at a local hospital, ensuring that the entire procedure is videographed and that samples from the body are preserved for any future investigations.

Senior advocate Aditya Sondhi, representing PUCL, communicated to the Court his intent to secure compliance with necessary guidelines, highlighting concerns about the potential premature cremation of the body. Advocate General Shashi Kiran Shetty assured the Court that an FIR had already been registered and that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) was looking into the matter, reiterating that there were no plans for cremation; rather, burial would occur after proper identification.

The Court has issued notices to the respondents, with a response expected by 24 April. *—PTI*

Cops nab chain snatchers, probe wider network

BENGALURU 15 APRIL

City police are probing a possible larger network involved in gold chain snatching and pawning after two recent cases involving three suspects and loot worth Rs 3.7 lakh.

In the first case, Konanakunte police arrested two men from Manjunathnagar who used a rented bike to snatch a 38-gram gold chain from a woman near BK Circle in March.

The stolen gold was traced to a local finance firm.

Separately, Yelahanka police nabbed a petrol bunk worker from Andhra Pradesh for snatching a 15-gram chain worth Rs 1.2 lakh from a woman in Kattigenahalli. He admitted to pledging the chain at a pawn shop in Madanapalle. Police are now investigating links to potential accomplices and pawn brokers accepting stolen jewellery, raising suspicion of a wider inter-state racket.S *—Salar News*

IN RS 364 CRORE CASE

HC tells Google to deposit 50% of FEMA fine

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

Karnataka High Court has directed Google India and three of its senior executives to furnish bank guarantees amounting to 50 per cent of the penalties imposed on them by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for alleged violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

The ED had levied a penalty of Rs 5 crore on Google India and an additional Rs 45 lakh collectively on the executives. The case involves alleged breaches of Section 6(3)(d) of FEMA, concerning transactions worth Rs 364 crore. According to the ED, Google India made payments to Google Ireland as distributor fees and to Google US for equipment purchases, which were not settled for several years. The ED claims these unpaid sums—Rs 363 crore to Google Ireland and Rs 1 crore to Google US—constituted commercial loans requiring prior approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The ED had levied a penalty of Rs 5 crore on Google India and an additional Rs 45 lakh collectively on the executives **PHOTO: xxx**

Google India has contested these allegations, arguing that the transactions did not qualify as foreign exchange borrowings.

The company asserted there were no loan agreements, deferred payments, or interest components, and it complied with an RBI circular dated 1 July 2014.

- In January 2019, the Appellate Tribunal for FEMA had granted a stay on the penalties, noting that Google India's appeal appeared to hold merit.

In January 2019, the Appellate Tribunal for FEMA had granted a stay on the penalties, noting that Google India's appeal appeared to hold merit. However, the High Court has now ruled that the stay was only a preliminary view and ordered the bank guarantees to be submitted within two weeks. *—PTI*

10 held with drugs worth ₹6 cr in City

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

Bengaluru Police seized drugs, cash, and vehicles worth over Rs 6.77 crore and arrested 10 individuals, including a foreign national and 9 others, in separate operations in Karnataka.

City police Commissioner B Dayanand in a statement said that an operation by the Anti-Narcotics Team resulted in the arrest of a suspect from Kerala who was found in possession of 3.5 kg of hydroponic ganja, Rs 26,06,500 in cash, and a mobile phone. The total value of the seized items is Rs 4.5 crore.

"In a separate operation, a foreign national was arrested, with authorities seizing 1 kg of MDMA crystals, one mobile phone, and a two-wheeler. The total value of the confiscated items is Rs 2 crore," Commissioner B Dayanand said in the statement.

In another related development, eight individuals from Kerala were arrested in a drug trafficking case. The police confiscated 110 grams of MDMA, 10 mobile phones, one tablet, and two cars. The total value of the items seized was Rs 27 lakh.

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda inspects Rs 6 crore worth of drugs seized in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Earlier, Bengaluru Police arrested a person and remanded him to judicial custody in connection with the abduction of a woman in Yelahanka during the night while returning to her hostel and the theft of her gold chain, valued at Rs 1.20 lakh. *—ANI*

Hemant elected JMM Chief, Shibu as founding patron

RANCHI, 15 APRIL

Hemant Soren has been elected as the central President of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), following a unanimous decision during the party's 13th Central Convention. His father, Shibu Soren, who has held the role of party Chief for the past 38 years, was designated as "founding patron." Senior party member Nalin Soren put forward Shibu Soren's name for the patron position, which received support from Stephen Marandi. Subsequently, the elder Soren nominated Hemant for the presidency, a motion that was passed unanimously by party members. Hemant has been fulfilling duties of executive President since 2015, marking a significant generational shift in leadership of JMM. The party seeks to continue its legacy and strengthen its position under new leadership. *—PTI*

India, Tanzania explore ways to boost defence ties

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Minister of state for Defence Sanjay Seth visited Tanzania on 13–14 April and met Defence Minister Stergomena Lawrence Tax in Dar es Salaam. They reviewed ongoing defence cooperation and explored new areas, including counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, cyber security, and training Tanzanian officers in Indian military institutions. Seth also called on Tanzanian Vice President Philip Isdor Mpango and discussed expanding defence ties, AIKEYME naval exercises, and broader collaboration in health, education, and culture. He co-inaugurated the harbour phase of the maiden Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME) and a Defence Expo aboard INS Chennai. The multilateral exercise included nine African nations. *—PTI*

Terrorists, security forces exchange fire in Poonch

JAMMU, 15 APRIL

A brief exchange of fire took place between terrorists and security forces in a village in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said on Tuesday. The gunfire rattled Lasana village of Surankote Monday night when security forces launched a search operation following information about the presence of terrorists, officials said. "Contact was established with terrorists during a joint operation with Police at Lasana, Surankote last night. Additional troops have been inducted, and search operations are ongoing to prevent terrorists from escaping," Army's Jammu-based White Knight Corps wrote on X. Officials said one Army officer was injured in firing, and was shifted to hospital. *—PTI*

Bomb threat emails alarm UP districts

LUCKNOW, 15 APRIL

A wave of bomb threat emails sent to various district Collectorate offices in Uttar Pradesh has resulted in security alerts, building evacuations, and extensive searches by bomb disposal squads. Authorities in Firozabad, Aligarh, Barabanki, and Chandauli acted swiftly upon receiving the emails on Tuesday, with no explosives or suspicious items discovered. In Ayodhya, a threatening email sent to the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust prompted police to increase security around the temple. Officials revealed that the sender of the email claiming explosives were planted at the collectorate in Barabanki identified himself as "Gopal Swami" and linked the threat to political issues in Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

TN forms panel for state autonomy amid DMK vs Guv

TN CM says Centre gradually snatching states' rights

CHENNAI, 15 APRIL

Alleging that states' rights were gradually being snatched by the Centre, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday announced the constitution of a panel under a retired Supreme Court Judge on state autonomy.

Opposition AIADMK slammed the CM over the announcement, asking what his DMK that shared power with Congress-led UPA earlier was doing all these years. The move was aimed at diverting public attention, principal Opposition party said.

Stepping up the attack on the BJP-led NDA at the Centre, Stalin said the high-level committee headed by former Supreme Court judge Kurian Joseph will examine in detail the relationship between the Union and state governments to ensure state autonomy. It will submit its interim report in January 2026. The final report with recommendations will be submitted in two years.

The panel will have former bureaucrat Ashok Vardhan Shetty and former vice-chairman of the state Planning Commission M Naganathan as its members.

"The committee will study, as per the law, to transfer those subjects that went from the State List to the Concurrent List," the Chief Minister said and pointed out that the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) was out of the purview of states.

"We are not stressing for devolution of power and funds merely considering Tamil Nadu's welfare but are keeping in mind the interests of the people of the vast expanse of the country stretching from Gujarat to the northeastern parts, from Kashmir to Kerala," Stalin said while making a statement in the TN Assembly. "Tamil Nadu's will be the first voice vis-a-vis discussions on state autonomy," he added.

The motive behind setting up the said panel is to protect the rights of all Indian states that work on the basis of "unity in diversity," Stalin added. *—PTI*

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin speaks during the state Assembly session, in Chennai **PHOTO: PTI**

MONEY LAUNDERING PROBE

ED grills Robert Vadra in Haryana land deal

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Businessman Robert Vadra, brother-in-law of Rahul Gandhi, was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) regarding a money laundering case linked to a land deal in Haryana. Vadra termed the agency's summons as "political vendetta," asserting that he has previously cooperated fully with the ED by providing thousands of documents.

He expressed his grievances en route to the ED headquarters, stating, "This is nothing but political vendetta... Whenever I speak for minorities, they try to stop me."

The ongoing investigation focuses on a February 2008 land purchase in Shikohpur, Gurugram.

Vadra's company, Skylight Hospitality Pvt Ltd, allegedly bought 3.5 acres for Rs 7.5 crore from Onkareshwar Properties, with claims that the land mutation happened almost instantaneously. The Haryana Police initially opened a case about this deal in 2018.

Although Vadra has previously been interrogated by the ED in separate money laundering cases, he and his wife, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who is a Congress MP, have not been named as accused in any charges. *—PTI*

Businessman Robert Vadra at Enforcement Directorate office for questioning in a land deal-linked money laundering case, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with LoP in Lok Sabha and party leader Rahul Gandhi and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Tejashwi meets Kharge, Rahul to plan Bihar polls

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav met with senior Congress figures, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, to discuss the Mahagathbandhan's (grand alliance) strategy for the forthcoming Bihar assembly elections.

Following the meeting, Yadav urged the media to refrain from speculating about alliance's chief ministerial candidate, emphasising that decisions would be made collectively by partners.

He accused Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of being "hijacked" by the BJP. Yadav highlighted the poor economic conditions in Bihar. *—PTI*

NITISH TO BE CM FACE IN BIHAR: JD(U)

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

The Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)) has firmly stated that Nitish Kumar will be the Chief Ministerial candidate for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the upcoming Bihar assembly elections. This announcement comes following comments made by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, suggesting that Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary could lead the BJP to victory.

JD(U) national spokesperson Rajeev Ranjan Prasad dismissed Saini's remarks. *—PTI*

WB violence: SC pleas seek probe

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Two petitions in the Supreme Court have sought a court-monitored probe into the violence in West Bengal over the newly-enacted Waqf (Amendment) Act.

Fresh incidents of Waqf law-related violence rocked Bhangar area in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on 14 April, even as police claimed the law and order situation in the previous riot epicentre of Murshidabad remained largely under control.

One PIL was filed by lawyer Shashank Shekhar Jha seeking the court to set up a special investigation team to probe the cases of violence. Another plea was filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari seeking the constitution of a five-member judicial enquiry commission headed by a former SC judge.

One of the pleas sought a direction to the state government to file a report in the top court on the violence aside from the directions for protecting people's lives and properties. Calcutta High Court recently ordered the deployment of central forces in violence-hit the district.

At least three people were killed and hundreds were rendered homeless in communal violence in parts of Murshidabad district on 11 and 12 April. —PTI

In SC, Uttarakhand Board backs Waqf

DEHRADUN, 15 APRIL

Uttarakhand Waqf Board has submitted an application to the Supreme Court, seeking permission to intervene in writ petition filed by AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi, who is challenging the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act. The Board, responsible for management of Waqf properties in Uttarakhand, argues it has a vested interest in the case and intends to assist the court with legal and factual submissions. *—PTI*

2 held for killing father & son in WB

KOLKATA, 15 APRIL

The West Bengal Police on Tuesday arrested two brothers for their alleged involvement in the killing of a father-son duo during communal violence in Murshidabad district, a senior officer said.

With the fresh arrests, a total of 221 people have been apprehended in connection with the recent violence in the Muslim-majority district during anti-Waqf (Amendment) Act protests.

The two accused, identified as Kalu Nadar and Dildar Nadar, are residents of Jafrabad area where the father-son duo also lived, the official said, adding that a special investigation team is investigating the case.

Kalu Nadar was arrested from Murarai in Birbhum district, while Dildar was nabbed from Suti in Murshidabad district, the IPS officer said.

Tight vigil in Murshidabad

Meanwhile, security forces are keeping a tight vigil to prevent any fresh episode of violence in Murshidabad district on Tuesday, officials said.

Personnel from the BSF, CRPF, State Armed Police and RAF have been deployed in large numbers in Jangipur, Dhuliyan, Suti and Shamsherganj, where no new incident of violence was reported in past 48 hours. *—PTI*

"How? How can she say she will not implement it? She is sitting in a constitutional position and the law is passed by a constitutional body, then how can she say that she will not follow something that is constitutional

-Kiren Rijiju, Parl Affairs Union Minister

"Bengal is burning, but its chief minister is silent and even calling the rioters messengers of peace. Stick is the only treatment for rioters, as *Laton ke bhoot baaton se kahan manne wale hain* (Those who respond only to thrashing don't understand words)

-Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

"Let the jihadi attacks on the lives and properties of Hindus of the state stop in the name of the Waqf movement

-VHP

BJP, AIADMK to hold joint discussion

CHENNAI, 15 APR

Tamil Nadu BJP President Nainar Nagenthran has confirmed that discussions regarding the allocation of seats to allies, including TTV Dhinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam and former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam (OPS), for the upcoming 2026 Assembly polls, will be handled jointly by AIADMK and BJP leadership.

During an interview, he noted his intention to highlight the concerns affecting the populace, asserting that his more measured approach would not hinder his advocacy for the BJP's goals. He acknowledged the work done by his predecessor K Annamalai, who is known for his assertive style, stating that he has effectively communicated party policies in Assembly.

Nainar Nagenthran **PHOTO: PTI**

Following AIADMK's recent rejoining of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on 11 April, Nagenthran said that seat sharing would be decided by the BJP's Parliamentary Board alongside AIADMK leadership. *—PTI*

Fee hikes: Delhi pvt schools get notices

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday announced that notices have been issued to private schools following complaints of arbitrary fee hikes and unfair treatment of students. She reaffirmed her government's commitment to transparency, equal opportunity, and the protection of children's rights in education.

Addressing a public meeting, Gupta highlighted a serious complaint regarding Queen Mary's School in Model Town, where parents alleged that the school had unjustly increased fees and expelled students. One parent claimed that when he refused to pay the hiked amount, the school confined his daughter to the library, barring her from attending classes.

Taking immediate action, the Chief Minister instructed officials to cancel the school's registration and initiate an investigation. "No school has the right to harass parents or remove students unfairly," Gupta stated.

She added that schools must adhere to established rules and regulations, and any violations would lead to strict consequences.

Notices have been served to several schools facing similar complaints, and they have been asked to respond. *—PTI*

OPPOSITION ENRAGED

Modi says 'Muslims repair punctures'

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on Monday that Muslims youths would not need to repair bicycle punctures for a livelihood had Waqf properties been used "honestly" has drawn sharp reactions from the Opposition.

Modi, while speaking at the inauguration of an airport at Hisar in Haryana, said lakhs of hectares of Waqf land are being misused and the amended Waqf law will address these issues. "If Waqf properties had been used honestly, Muslim youths wouldn't need to earn a livelihood from repairing bicycle punctures. Only the land mafia benefited from these properties. This mafia was looting lands belonging to Dalit, backward sections and widows," he said.

PM Narendra Modi and AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi **PHOTO: PTI**

AIMIM Chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi said that had the Sangh Pariwar used its ideology and resources in the country's interest, the PM "would not have had to sell tea" in his childhood.

Owaisi asked what Modi has done for the poor Hindus or Muslims since he came to power in 2014. "The biggest reason for what happened with Waqf properties is that Waqf laws were always weak. Modi's Waqf amendments will weaken them further," he posted on X.

Congress MP Imran Pratapgarhi said, "Such a remark does not suit the Prime Minister. Also, you have brought the country's youth to this point. There are no jobs. The only option is to fix punctures or sell fritters." *—Agencies*

Assamese now must for Assam government work

GUWAHATI, 15 APRIL

The Assam government has mandated the compulsory use of the Assamese language for all official work across the state, with exceptions for three districts in the Barak Valley and five in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). This decision was enacted through an official notification issued today, coinciding with Bohag, the Assamese New Year.

Himanta Biswa Sarma **PHOTO: PTI**

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that while Assamese will be the primary official language, English will remain in use for communications. In the Barak Valley districts of Cachar, Hailakandi, and Sribhumi, Bengali will complement English for official purposes, while in the BTR districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri, and Tamulpur, Bodo will serve the same function alongside English.

The notification dictates that all government documents—including notifications, office memoranda, and regulations—must be translated into Assamese, with Bodo and Bengali translations where applicable, within 30 days of their issuance by the central government. *—PTI*

DU reserves seats in Veer Savarkar college for village

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Delhi University (DU) has announced the establishment of Veer Savarkar College in Najafgarh, reserving two seats in each course for residents of Roshanpura village, which donated land for the institution. One of these seats will be allocated for female applicants to encourage gender inclusion. The college, located just five minutes from DU's West Campus, is being built at a cost of Rs 140 crore and will span over 18,816.56 square metres. Kickstarting its first major expansion in nearly 30 years, DU will initially offer two four-year undergraduate programmes – BSc Computer Science and Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), each with 60 seats. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gujarat man who threatened Salman mentally unstable

VADODARA, 15 APRIL

A man who allegedly issued a death threat to Bollywood actor Salman Khan has been located in a village in Gujarat's Vadodara district and found to be mentally unstable, police saids. The 26-year-old suspect, Mayank Pandya, was apprehended by Mumbai police on Monday and served with a notice to appear for questioning when required; he has not been arrested. The threat to bomb Khan's car and assault him at his home, was received via a WhatsApp message by the Mumbai Traffic Police. Following the investigation, authorities identified Pandya as the sender and coordinated with Waghodia police to visit his home. Police Superintendent Rohan Anand confirmed that Pandya is undergoing treatment for mental health issues. —*PTI*

Class 8 student attacks friend with sickle over a pencil

TIRUNELVELI, 15 APRIL

A class 8 student from Palayamkottai sustained injuries on Tuesday when a classmate attacked him with a sickle following an argument over a pencil. Police reports said the victim suffered minor injuries in several places, but his condition is stable. A teacher who attempted to intervene also sustained minor injuries. The conflict between the two had been ongoing, stemming from a disagreement over the sharing of a pencil. With tensions running high, one of the students reportedly concealed the sickle in his school bag and launched the attack. Police said the errant student will be referred to the child welfare committee. The relatives of the injured student expressed deep concern regarding a class 8 pupil bringing a weapon to the school, raising questions about safety of the students in the institution. —*PTI*

SC dismisses PIL to make dowry laws gender-neutral

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea to make laws on dowry harassment and maintenance "gender neutral." The bench, comprising Justice Surya Kant and Justice N Kotiswar Singh, stated that it is Parliament's role to amend laws, not the courts. The PIL filed by NGO Janshruti said existing provisions are misused against husbands and their families. However, the court highlighted that allegations of misuse must be examined case by case and cannot justify a blanket change in legislation. Justice Kant said provisions aimed at safeguarding women should not be struck down based on broad claims of misuse, while underscoring the necessity for a carefully balanced approach to all matrimonial disputes. —*PTI*

Govt blames private Hajj operators for quota cut

Agencies failed to meet deadlines set by Saudi, claims MoMA

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

The Saudi Haj Ministry, citing safety concerns and extreme summer heat conditions, refused to extend deadlines for any country **PHOTO: PTI**

Amid growing concerns over a reported reduction in India's private Hajj quota by Saudi Arabia, the government clarified on Tuesday that the shortfall resulted from private tour operators failing to meet critical deadlines set by Saudi authorities.

In a statement, the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) said that despite repeated reminders, the 26 Combined Haj Group Operators (CHGOs)—formed after over 800 private tour operators were consolidated under new Saudi guidelines—failed to finalise essential contracts for accommodation, transport, and Mina camps, as required under Saudi regulations.

India's total Hajj quota for 2025 stands at 1,75,025, up from 1,36,020 in 2014. Of this, 1,22,518 is managed by the Haj Committee of India under MoMA, while 52,507 slots are allocated to private tour operators.

While government-managed Hajj arrangements were completed on time, the CHGOs' delay led to a situation where available space in Mina—crucial for completing Hajj rituals—was already occupied. The Saudi Haj Ministry, citing safety concerns and extreme summer heat conditions, refused to extend deadlines for any country.

However, following sustained engagement by the Indian government, including ministerial-level talks, Saudi Arabia has agreed to reopen the Nusuk Haj Portal. This will allow CHGOs to complete arrangements for 10,000 pilgrims, based on current space availability in Mina. The Ministry has issued urgent directions to CHGOs to act promptly. The statement emphasised that India would welcome any further gesture by Saudi authorities to accommodate more pilgrims.

The issue has drawn sharp political reactions. J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah urged the External Affairs Minister to engage with Saudi authorities. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti highlighted the distress caused to pilgrims and operators, while Congress's Syed Naseer Hussain called for urgent diplomatic intervention, stressing the need to secure the rights of India's large Muslim population. —*Salar News*

STATE-SPECIFIC DISASTER

T'gana to pay ₹4L compensation for sunstroke death

HYDERABAD, 15 APRIL

Heatwaves remain a 'hidden hazard' whose impacts are under-recognised because of challenges in measurement and valuation **PHOTO: X**

Telangana Government on Tuesday issued orders to declare heatwave or sunstroke as a "State-Specific Disaster" henceforth for providing relief to the families of the victims. Under the new Government Order, Rs 4 lakh ex-gratia will be provided to the kin of the deceased.

"The state government, having taken into consideration all the above-mentioned facts, have decided to declare heatwave/sunstroke as a "State Specific Disaster" henceforth for the purpose of providing relief to the families of the victims…" the order said.

Heatwaves remain a "hidden hazard" whose impacts are under-recognised because of challenges in measurement and valuation. There is under-reporting of deaths and severe impact of heat waves, especially in the vulnerable sections of the population, including women, children and elderly, it said.

The government order further said it was observed in Telangana that except for five districts, all other 28 districts witness at least 15 days of heatwave.

In the absence of a specific ex-gratia, the state until now was providing assistance of Rs 50,000 under Apathbandhu scheme to the family of the deceased who died due to heatwave or sunstroke.

The district collector concerned will ensure that the appropriate authorities diagnose the heat-related death based on the history of exposure to high ambient temperature and the reasonable exclusion of other causes of hyperthermia, the order said. —*PTI*

8 HELD IN UP FOR DALIT'S MURDER OVER LOVE AFFAIR

PRAYAGRAJ, 15 APRIL

Eight people were arrested and sent to jail in the murder of a 35-year-old Dalit man in Isota village here, a police official said on Tuesday.

Police said Devi Shankar was killed on Saturday following a fight over a romantic affair and an attempt was made to burn his body. The incident happened under the Karchana police station limits in Prayagraj.

Yamuna Nagar Deputy Commissioner of Police Vivek Chand Yadav said eight accused were arrested on Monday. This included Dilip Singh alias Chhuttan, Awadhesh Singh, Vimlesh Gupta, Mohit Singh, Sanjay Singh alias Sonu, Manoj Singh, Shekhar Singh and Ajay Singh. According to the DCP, during investigation it came to light that Devi Shankar was killed following scuffle over a romantic affair. He said the deceased and Awadhesh were in love with the same girl. —*PTI*

GLOBETROTTER

After a 114-day stay in Southern Africa, Chiuluan 2, a radio-tagged Amur Falcon from Manipur's Tamenglong , has begun its journey back to Siberia. Scientists have been tracking the bird since November. **PHOTO: WII**

BJP leader among 8 arrested in UP for gangraping 15-yr-old

KASGANJ, 15 APRIL

- While three men raped the girl, others took her gold earrings and Rs 5,000 cash and also forcibly got Rs 5,000 transferred from her fiance's mobile through UPI, the victim alleged in her complaint

BJP leader Akhilesh Pratap Singh is among eight of the 10 accused arrested on Monday for the alleged gangrape of a minor girl in Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj.

The 16-year-old gangrape survivor in Kasganj on Tuesday recorded her statement before the magistrate in court, a police official said.

On 10 April, the girl, along with a 17-year-old youth with whom her marriage had been fixed, had gone to get her ration card prepared.

After returning from the DSO office, they were sitting near a canal when Yogesh, Ajay and seven to eight other men came there and took the duo into bushes.

While three men raped the girl, others took her gold earrings and Rs 5,000 cash and also forcibly got Rs 5,000 transferred from her fiance's mobile through UPI, the victim alleged in her complaint to the police.

Two armed guards, two women constables, and five other security personnel have been deployed for round-the-clock protection of the survivor, the police officer said.

Meanwhile, the Public Relations Officers (PROs) of the district police denied providing the survivor's fiance with security.

However, police said the youth remains in contact with the police and his safety is being monitored. —*Agencies*

BJP MLA's son booked for violence at Dewas temple

BHOPAL, 15 APRIL

Madhya Pradesh police have registered a case against the son of a BJP MLA and eight others for forcibly entering the Mata Tekri temple in Dewas after it was closed, an official said on Tuesday.

Following the incident last week, CCTV footage of the temple premises surfaced on social media, and the Congress, the Opposition party, alleged the involvement of Rudraksh Shukla, son of BJP's Indore-3 MLA Golu Shukla in the incident.

Additional Superintendent of Police Jaiveer Bhadoriya said one Jitu Raghuvanshi was named in the FIR on the first day, and the names of Rudraksh Shukla, Aman, Lokesh, Manish, Aniruddha, Honey, Sachin and Prashant were included on Monday.

According to the police, a group of people in a fleet of SUVs forcibly entered the temple premises and allegedly assaulted its priest for resisting them. —*PTI*

SC extends Khedkar's protection from arrest

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

The SC told Khedkar that she cannot avail separate attempts to clear the test as an 'able candidate' and a 'disabled candidate' **PHOTO: X/PTI**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday extended till 21 April the protection from arrest granted to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, accused of cheating and wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination.

A bench comprising Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma took note of the submissions of Khedkar's counsel that her rejoinder to the reply filed by the Delhi government has been submitted, but it has not come on record.

The bench took note of the submissions and listed the matter for hearing on 21 April and asked the apex court registry to verify whether Khedkar's rejoinder is filed.

The bench, meanwhile, allowed the plea of her counsel that the protection from arrest granted her on 15 January in the case be extended till the next date of hearing.

On 18 March, the top court orally told Khedkar that she cannot avail separate attempts to clear the test as an "able candidate" and a "disabled candidate".

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the Delhi government, had said they need custodial interrogation of Khedkar to identify the middlemen involved in the alleged scam of preparing fake disability certificates for UPSC aspirants. —*PTI*

- A bench comprising Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma took note of the submissions and listed the matter for hearing on 21 April and asked the apex court registry to verify whether Khedkar's rejoinder has been filed

Teen kills 72-year-old, records video while jumping on body

HYDERABAD, 15 APRIL

A 75-year-old woman was murdered by a teenage migrant worker in her home in Kushaiguda on 11 April, a crime that came to light after the suspect shared a disturbing video with a relative of the victim.

Police said the teenager, who worked at a shop owned by the victim, allegedly bludgeoned her to death with an iron rod. He then decorated her body with a sari, tying it to a ceiling fan, before recording a video of himself jumping on her body. The video was later sent to a relative of the victim, prompting the family to alert the authorities on Monday.

When police arrived, they found the woman's decomposed body after breaking down the locked door of her home. Investigators believe the teenager may have had a personal grudge against the victim, who was originally from Rajasthan, due to alleged previous abuse. —*PTI*

Vir Das flays AI for broken seats, lack of wheelchair

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Vir Das, Shivani Mathur **PHOTO: ANI**

Comedian–actor Vir Das on Tuesday said Air India did not provide a wheelchair for his wife, recovering from a fractured foot, despite it being prebooked.

The Tata-owned carrier admitted that the comedian's experience fell "short of expectations" and noted that there was a delay, not a denial, in providing the wheelchair to his wife, Shivani Mathur.

Das criticised the airline on X, saying he paid Rs 50,000 each for two seats on the flight from Mumbai to Delhi on Monday evening but faced multiple issues during the journey. "My wife and I book Pranaam and a wheelchair because she's got a foot fracture that's still healing. We're flying to delhi. 50grand a seat. Broken table, broken leg rests, her seat is stuck reclined, won't straighten fully. Were told the flight is 'newly refurbished'," he said in the post.

When the flight landed, "My wife with a fracture makes it down the stepladder. I tell an Air India staff member at the bottom near the buses what happened. He says 'sir kya Karein…sorry'," he said.

The Air India replied, "We empathise with the guests, especially given the mobility concern involved, and recognise that this experience fell short of expectations." —*PTI*

REFORM LAG

90% women cops in junior ranks: Report

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Despite growing awareness, no state or Union Territory has met its target for women's representation in policing **PHOTO: ANI**

A vast majority of women in India's police force – around 90 per cent – serve in junior roles, with fewer than 1,000 in senior positions such as Director-Generals or Superintendents of Police, according to the India Justice Report (IJR) 2025.

Released on Tuesday, the report – an initiative of Tata Trusts – tracks the performance of states across Police, Judiciary, Prisons, and Legal Aid. Despite growing awareness, no state or Union Territory has met its target for women's representation in policing. Out of 2.4 lakh women in police, only 960 are in IPS ranks, while 2.17 lakh serve as constables. Madhya Pradesh leads with the highest number of women Deputy Superintendents (133).

Karnataka topped the rankings among 18 large and mid-sized states in justice delivery, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

While 78 per cent of police stations have Women Help Desks and 86 per cent of prisons support video conferencing, systemic issues remain. Women now make up 38 per cent of the district judiciary, but SCs and STs remain under-represented at 14 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively.

India has just 15 judges for every million people. High Courts are left with 33 per cent vacancies, and district courts 21 per cent, with massive backlogs. Prisons are overcrowded, averaging 131 per cent occupancy, with Uttar Pradesh among the worst-affected.

Legal aid funding has improved, but paralegal volunteers have dropped by 38 per cent, and prison healthcare remains dire, with a 775:1 prisoner-doctor ratio. —*PTI*

JELLY ON SHORE

Thousands of jellyfish have washed up on the shores of Calesfonts, a small fishing port in Menorca, Spain. These jellyfishes are known as 'by-the-wind sailors'. These were found on the shores piled up like a carpet of deflated blue and purple balloons. About a billion jellyfish-like "purple sailors" were also seen washed up on West coast beaches of the United States

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Iran and US nuke talks marred by lack of trust

US President Donald Trump stated that Iran will be in 'great danger' if the negotiations fail ***PHOTO: PTI***

The announcement of planned talks between the US and Iran in Oman signifies a crucial development – especially given the history of distrust and animosity that has characterised their interactions.

There remains a degree of confusion as to whether the negotiations over Iran's development of a nuclear capacity will be direct or indirect.

The US has said that its Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, will meet Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi. Donald Trump has publicly stated that Iran will be in "great danger" if the negotiations fail.

Iran meanwhile has said that talks will be conducted through an intermediary. Araghchi commented that: "It is as much an opportunity as it is a test. The ball is in America's court."

This seeming clash in messaging before the talks have even begun is not the greatest omen for their success, even with the threat of US or Israeli military action hovering over Iran. Representatives from Iran, China and Russia are reported to have met in Moscow on 8 April.

China's foreign ministry released a statement reminding the world that it was the US "which unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal or joint comprehensive plan of action] and caused the current situation".

It stressed the need for Washington to "show political sincerity, act in the spirit of mutual respect, engage in dialogue and consultation, and stop the threat of force and maximum pressure".

This followed messaging from Washington which very much focused on the possibility of force and maximum pressure. Speaking to the press after meeting the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump struck a very aggressive note, saying: "Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon and if the talks aren't successful, I actually think it will be a very bad day for Iran if that's the case." The US president's much discussed transactional approach to diplomacy – as represented at the talks by Witkoff, a former real-estate developer – is likely be pivotal to how negotiations proceed.

Trump's geopolitical ambitions in the Middle East focus on expanding the Abraham accords. These agreements focused on normalising relations between Israel and various Arab countries – including UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan.

The signing of the accords in 2020 were seen as a key foreign policy achievement of Trump's first administration, particularly in terms of America's desire to counter Iran in the region.

The US is now actively working to bring Saudi Arabia into the fold. In that respect, recognising that Riyadh's participation would mark a transformative shift in regional geopolitics.

Additionally, Trump aims to leverage trade agreements and major investment initiatives to create economic dependencies that encourage diplomatic normalisation.

Iran, meanwhile, faces severe economic difficulties. The country's economy is in a state of crisis, with high inflation, a depreciating currency and widespread poverty. These conditions have been worsened by international sanctions and domestic policy failures. As a result, Iran is in dire need of economic concessions, which could be a significant point of leverage for US.

Tehran's geopolitical clout has weakened considerably over the past 18 months. Military setbacks in 2024 – including the loss of key allies and leaders in groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah – have diminished Iran's ability to project power in its region.

This weakened position will affect Iran's negotiating stance. It could make it more likely that Iran's negotiators might seek economic relief and diplomatic solutions rather than pursuing aggressive policies. But pressure from hardliners within Iran could push the country towards a more radical approach if concessions are not forthcoming.

A major issue affecting the talks is the low level of trust between the two parties. The US's involvement in the Gaza conflict – including Trump's controversial proposal to clear Gaza of Palestinians to make way for possible redevelopment – has further strained relations. So has the recent US campaign against the Tehran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Further threats of this kind are likely to be seen by Iran as aggressive and coercive – and Trump's latest rhetoric won't have helped.

This will inevitably undermine the prospects for trust between the parties.Iran's scepticism is rooted in past experiences where promises of economic relief were not fulfilled. *—The Conversation*

SALAR ساڈا

India has just 15 judges per 10 lakh people

There are only 15 judges per 10 lakh population in the country, a far cry from the Law Commission's recommendation of 50 judges per million population, a 2025 report on India's judicial system released on Tuesday said.

"For 1.4 billion people, India has 21,285 judges, or approximately 15 judges per million population. This continues to be significantly below the 1987 law commission's recommendation of 50 judges per million population," said the 2025 India Justice Report, which ranks states on the delivery of justice in the country.

While the vacancies in high courts stood at 33 per cent of the total sanctioned strength, the report claimed 21 per cent vacancies in 2025, indicating a high workload for the existing judges.

"Nationally, in the district courts, the average workload is 2,200 cases per judge. In the Allahabad and Madhya Pradesh High Courts, the caseload per judge amounts to 15,000," the report said.

The overall share of women judges, the report said, in the district judiciary increased from 30 per cent in 2017 to 38.3 per cent, and it increased from 11.4 per cent to 14 per cent in the high courts in 2025.

"There is a higher share of women judges in the district courts as compared to the high courts and the Supreme Court (six per cent). Currently, there is only one woman chief justice across the 25 high courts," the report said.

The report said Delhi district courts were among judicial branches with the lowest vacancies in the country with 11 per cent, and in which women comprised 45 per cent judges.

"In the district judiciary, only five per cent of judges belong to scheduled tribes (STs) and 14 per cent are from scheduled castes (SCs). Of the 698 high court judges appointed since 2018, only 37 judges are from SC and ST categories," it added.

The overall representation of other backward castes (OBCs) in the judiciary was 25.6 per cent, the report said.

The national per capita spend on legal aid was Rs 6.46 per annum whereas the national per capita spend on the judiciary stood at Rs 182, it added."No state spends more than one per cent of its total annual expenditure on the judiciary," the report claimed.

Underlining the pendency of cases, it said, "Barring Karnataka, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura, one in every two cases have been pending for more than three years in all high courts."

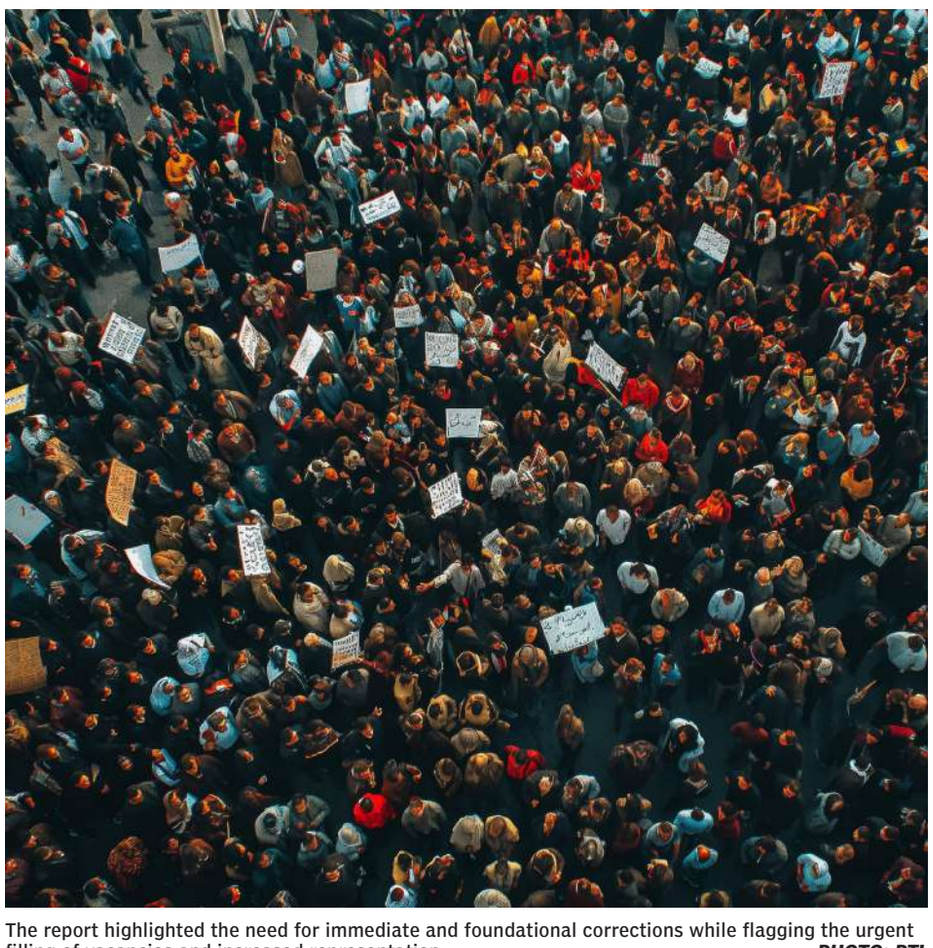
The report added, "At the district courts in Andaman and Nicobar, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, over 40 per cent of all cases have been pending for over three years."

One in every five cases, the report said, were pending for more than five years in Delhi, and two per cent were pending for more than 10 years.

"Each district court judge in Delhi had an average workload of 2,023 cases in 2024, an increase from 1,551 in 2017, and lower than the national average of 2,200. It could achieve a case clearance rate (CCR) of 78 per cent in 2024, one of the lowest in the country. Between 2017 and 2024, Delhi has achieved a 100 per cent CCR only once in 2023," the report said.

The report was stated to highlight the need for immediate and foundational corrections while flagging the urgent filling of vacancies and increased representation.

A release said the report was initiated by Tata Trusts in 2019 and the fourth edition of the report was in collaboration with the Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS–Prayas, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, and How India Lives. *—PTI*



The report highlighted the need for immediate and foundational corrections while flagging the urgent filling of vacancies and increased representation. ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Extremists targeting children via porn, violent content on social media

For some kids, the process starts with violent pornography or a fascination for gory images and counterterrorism, says investigators ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

After his arrest, the boy's mother was stunned to discover that her 12-year-old had been learning how to kill and gorging on videos of decapitation and torture so gruesome they made even case-hardened French court officials look away.

The mother told criminal investigators that she'd thought her son had been playing video games and doing homework during the hours he spent in his room. The child's descent into the internet's darkest recesses started innocently enough, with online searches about Islam after an aunt gave him a Quran as a gift, says the boy's lawyer.

From there, more searching, automated algorithms that steer users' online experiences and the boy's curiosity ultimately led him to encrypted chats and ultraviolent propaganda pumped out by Islamic State militants and other extremist groups that are worming their way via apps, video gaming and social media into the minds of the very young.

Paul-Edouard Lallois, the French prosecutor who secured the boy's conviction on two terror-related charges last August, says the thousands of images and other extreme content that the child viewed so warped his understanding of the world and of right and wrong that "it will take years and years of work to enable this kid to recover normal bearings".

The prosecutor believes that left unstopped, the boy was on a trajectory to possibly becoming a "completely dehumanized soldier" who risked joining the ranks of digitally radicalized teenagers in France and beyond who are hatching terror plots and expressing support for extremism.

The huge library of violent content, several terabytes of data, that the boy amassed included video tutorials on bomb-making, the prosecutor said."It is possible to completely upend the mental bearings of such a young child," he said. "Do that for a few years and, even before he has turned 18, he's already capable of, yes, committing an attack and the worst things with just a knife."

An emerging global threat

Across Europe and further afield, the picture is similar: Counterterrorism agencies are grappling with a new generation of attackers, plotters and acolytes of extremism who are younger than ever and have fed on ultraviolent and potentially radicalising content largely behind their screens. Some are appearing on police radars only when it's already too late — with knife in hand, as they're carrying out an attack.

Olivier Christen, France's national anti-terrorism prosecutor who handles the country's most serious terror investigations, has a firsthand view of the surging threat. His unit handed terror-related preliminary charges to just two minors in 2022. That number leapt to 15 in 2023 and again last year, to 19.

Some are "really very, very young, around 15 years old, which was something that was almost unheard of no more than two years ago", Christen said in an interview with The Associated Press.

It "demonstrates the strong effectiveness of the propaganda disseminated by terrorist organisations, which are quite good at targeting this age group". The so-called "Five Eyes" intelligence-sharing network that usually shuns the limelight, comprising US, UK, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand security agencies, is so alarmed that it took the unusual step in December of calling publicly for collective action, saying: "Radicalised minors can pose the same credible terrorist threat as adults."

In Germany, an Interior Ministry task force launched after deadly mass stabbings last year is focusing on teenagers' social networks, aiming to counter their growing role in radicalisation. In France, the domestic DGSI security agency says 70 per cent of suspects detained for involvement in alleged terror plots are under the age of 21.

In Austria, security services say a 19-year-old suspect arrested in August, with an 18-year-old and a 17-year-old, for an alleged ISIS-inspired plot to slaughter Taylor Swift concertgoers, was radicalized online. So, too, was a suspected ISIS supporter, aged 14, detained this February for an alleged plan to attack a Vienna train station.

The VSSE intelligence agency in Belgium says almost a third of suspects detained there for plotting attacks from 2022 to 2024 were minors — the youngest only 13. Extremist propaganda "is just a click away for young people in search of an identity or a purpose", it said in a report in January, with radicalization occurring at speeds that are "nothing short of meteoric".

Counter-terror investigators say the online radicalisation of a child can sometimes take just months. Digitally nimble, kids are adept at covering their tracks and skirting parental controls. The 12-year-old's mother had no inkling that her boy was consulting extremist content, the family's lawyer, Kamel Aissaoui, told AP. And unlike previous generations of militants who were easier for police to track and monitor because they interacted in the real world, their successors are often interacting only in digital spaces, including on encrypted chats to mask their identities and activities, investigators say.

"They live on their phones, their tablets, their computers, in contact with people they don't know," said a senior official from a European intelligence agency who spoke to AP. For some kids, the process starts with violent pornography or a fascination for gory images, counterterrorism investigators say.

From there, more clicks can lead to grisly murder videos from Mexican drug cartels and ultimately to jihadi decapitations, throat-slitting and torture, in videos that are sometimes slickly produced with music and are shared on chat groups. *—PTI*

Trump admin freezes funds to Harvard

Democrats back varsity's decision on activism on campus, call on others to take a stand

BOSTON, 15 APRIL

The federal government froze more than USD 2.2 billion in grants and contracts to Harvard University, since the institution said Monday it won't comply with the Trump administration's demands to limit activism on campus.

In a letter to Harvard Friday, the administration called for reshaping of admissions, hiring of faculty, leadership and conduct an audit on their views about diversity. They also called for a ban on face masks, which appeared to target pro-Palestinian protesters, stop recognising or funding any student group or club that promotes criminal activity.

Harvard President Alan Garber, in a letter to the Harvard community said the demands violated the university's First Amendment rights and "exceeds the statutory limits of the government's authority under Title VI," which prohibits discrimination against students based on their race, colour or national origin.

"No government, regardless of which party is in power should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue," Garber wrote, adding that the university had taken extensive reforms to address antisemitism.

"These ends will not be achieved by assertions of power, unmoored from the law, to control teaching and learning at Harvard and to dictate how we operate. The work of addressing our shortcomings, fulfilling our commitments, and embodying our values is ours to define and undertake as a community."

Democrats expressed support for Harvard's stance and called for other universities to do the same. Former President Barack Obama praised Havard for rejecting an unlawful and ham-handed attempt to stifle academic freedom. Senator Bernie Sander posted on X "Congratulations to Harvard for refusing to relinquish its constitutional rights to Trump's authoritarianism. Other universities should follow their lead. And instead of doing pro bono work for Trump, cowardly law firms should be defending those who believe in the rule of law." —*PTI*

In a letter to Harvard on Friday, the administration called for reshaping of admissions, hiring of faculty, leadership and conduct an audit on their views about diversity **PHOTO: X**

PHOTO: X

US flies bombers over N Korea on founder's birthday

SEOUL, 15 APRIL

The US flew long-range B-1B bombers over the Korean Peninsula on Tuesday in a show of force against North Korea, days after Kim Yo Jong, sister of leader Kim Jong Un, vowed to resist US-led denuclearisation efforts. The drill coincided with North Korea's key national holiday – the 113th birthday of state founder Kim Il Sung – and may provoke a stronger response than usual. South Korea's Defence Ministry said the bombers took part in joint drills with South Korean and US fighter jets, aiming to bolster deterrence against the North's nuclear threats. It marked the second B-1B deployment since Trump's second term began. Pyongyang previously condemned such drills as provocative, following up with missile tests and threats. —*PTI*

China alleges US cyber espionage at Asian Games

TAIPEI, 15 APRIL

China has accused three alleged US operatives of conducting cyberattacks during the Asian Games held in Harbin in February. Harbin police named them as Katheryn A Wilson, Robert J Snelling, and Stephen W Johnson, claiming they worked through the US National Security Agency (NSA). The attacks reportedly targeted systems managing the Games—such as registration, travel, and competition entry compromising large amounts of personal data. Critical infrastructure in Heilongjiang province, including energy, transport, and defence research institutions, was also allegedly affected. The state-run Xinhua News Agency said the operatives aimed to disrupt the Games. They also reportedly targeted Huawei and transmitted encrypted data to devices running MS Windows. —*PTI*

Gunmen kidnap 2 polio vaccinators in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, 15 APRIL

Two polio vaccination workers were abducted at gunpoint on Monday in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police reported. Muhammad Asif and Raz Muhammad were travelling by passenger bus from Kulachi to Dera Ismail Khan when five armed men intercepted the vehicle in the Kulachi police jurisdiction. The assailants forcibly removed the two health workers and took them to an undisclosed location. Muhammad Asif heads the Polio Village Muddi Muhammad, while Raz Muhammad is responsible for in Kulachi District, Dera Ismail Khan. As of the latest report, no group has claimed responsibility for the abduction. —*PTI*

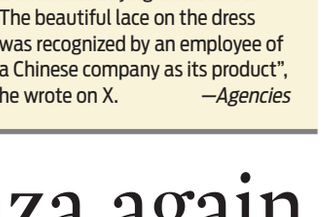
Singapore House dissolved, to hold election on 3 May

SINGAPORE, 15 APRIL

Singapore's Parliament was dissolved on Tuesday, setting the stage for general elections on 3 May. Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, leading the long-ruling People's Action Party (PAP), will face his first electoral test since taking over from Lee Hsien Loong last year. The PAP, in power since independence in 1965, is expected to win, though its dominance has weakened. In the 2020 polls, the party's support dropped to 61 per cent, and opposition seats rose to a record 10. Wong aims to win over younger, disillusioned voters with his "Forward Singapore" plan and is introducing over 30 new candidates. Key concerns include rising living costs, unaffordable housing, and immigration. Wong warned that Singapore's true contest is "Singapore versus the world." —*PTI*

Trump flip-flops on chips, pharma tariffs

BANGKOK, 15 APRIL



US President Donald Trump oscillated on the issue of imposing tariffs on semiconductor chips and pharmaceutical drugs, as the department of Commerce said it is investigating how imports of computer chips, chip making equipment may affect national security and asses the potential of US domestic production of computer chips and manufacture drugs for medicine.

Asked about his plans for more tariffs on pharmaceuticals, Trump said Monday, "Yeah, we're going to be doing that." He said it would be in the "not too distant future the country would be making its own drugs.

The move comes a day after Chinese Presdient Xi Jinping visited 3 ASEAN nations and signed a series of trade deals with Vietnam, meeting its president Luong Cuong. Trump complained about the meeting, which comes days after his tariffs upended global markets and left governments across the world scrambling. Reacting to the meeting Monday, Trump said China and Vietnam were trying "to figure out how do we screw the United States of America.".

Meanwhile, Kevin Hassett, a top economic adviser to President Trump, reacted to China's decision to stop exports of some rare earth minerals, critical ingredients in electronic manufacturing, calling it "concerning" adding "We're thinking about all the options right now." —*PTI*

Democratic groups brace for probe as Trump wields executive power

New York, 15 April

As President Donald Trump pushes the boundaries of executive power, some of the Democratic Party's core political institutions are preparing for the possibility that the federal government may soon launch criminal investigations against them. Officials at the Democrats' dominant national fundraising platform, ActBlue, and the party's largest protest group, Indivisible, are working with their attorneys for just such a scenario. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt did not downplay the threat when asked specifically whether Trump wants any federal agency to investigate Democratic groups. —*PTI*

Chinese suppliers say they make luxury goods for US at half the price

Budapest, 15 April

Amid the tariff war, social media is inundated with how US luxury brands like Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Birkin, Prada, get their products made in the Asian country for a fraction of the price. In one such video, a Chinese man, the owner of a luxury goods OEM for top brands, says that attempts by these companies to move away from China have actually reduced the quality. "For this, I am not proud because we are just making our wages. The profit margin for the people who are actually making the bags are very low," he said, adding that they have the best quality control, craftsmanship, and a complete supply chain. —*Agencies*

Was WH Secretary's dress made in China? Lace attire grabs attention

Yew York, 15 April

During a recent White House briefing, Karoline Leavitt appeared in a red and black lace dress that quickly drew attention on social media. Users pointed out its resemblance to a design available on several Chinese e-commerce platforms, though it remains unconfirmed whether the dress was made in China. Zhang Zhisheng, Chinese Consul General to Indonesia criticised Leavitt on X for wearing a dress allegedly made from Chinese lace. "Accusing China is business. Buying China is life. The beautiful lace on the dress was recognized by an employee of a Chinese company as its product", he wrote on X. —*Agencies*

Israel targets hospital in Gaza again

DEIR AL-BALAH, 15 APRIL

- The military has struck hospitals on several occasions during the 18-month war, accusing Hamas militants of hiding out in them or using them for military purposes

An Israeli airstrike hit the gate of a field hospital in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, wounding 10 people, including three medics and seven patients, a spokesman for the hospital said.

The strike hit the Kuwaiti Field Hospital in the Muwasi area, where hundreds of thousands of people have sought shelter in sprawling tent camps. Saber Mohammed, a spokesman for the hospital, said two of the patients were critically wounded.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The military has struck hospitals on several occasions during the 18-month war, accusing Hamas militants of hiding out in them or using them for military purposes.

Hospital staff have denied the allegations and accused Israel of recklessly endangering civilians and gutting the territory's health system.

On Sunday, Israel struck Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, the last major hospital providing critical care in northern Gaza, after ordering an evacuation. A patient died during the evacuation, and the strike severely damaged the emergency room, pharmacy and surrounding buildings, hospital authorities said.

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, which runs the hospital, condemned the strike.

Israel said it targeted a Hamas command and control centre within the facility, without providing evidence. Hamas denied the allegations.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on 7 October, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. —*PTI*

Injured people being brought to Shifa Hospital in Gaza City after an Israeli attack on the al-Ahli Arab Hospital **PHOTO: [ABDELHAKIM ABU RIASH/AL JAZEERA]**

A manufacturer demonstrates a Ukrainian made unmanned ground vehicle at the recent Ukraine Defense Innovations exhibition **PHOTO: PTI**

Ukraine war is Biden's, not mine, says Trump

WASHINGTON, 15 APRIL

Amidst widespread condemnation of Russia's attack on Sumy on Palm Sunday morning killing 34 and wounding 119, US President Donald Trump seemed to shift blame on the Ukraine war.

Posting a statement on social media over the ongoing war in Ukraine, he said "NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS WAR". Despite his repeated promise as a candidate that he'd have the Russia-Ukraine war settled within 24 hours even before taking office he said Monday: "I just got here. The War between Russia and Ukraine is Biden's war, not mine. I just got here, and for four years during my term, had no problem in preventing it from happening," Trump said.

Trump last month said he'd been "a little bit sarcastic" when he had past pledged he'd resolve the war.

Russia on Monday claimed its deadly missile attack on Ukraine's Sumy had targeted a gathering of Ukrainian troops. Asked about the attack, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia's military only strikes military targets. Russia's Defense Ministry said the strike targeted a gathering of senior military officers and accused Kyiv of using civilians as shields by holding military meetings in the city's centre. The ministry claimed to kill over 60 troops. Russia gave no evidence to back its claims. —*PTI*

OVER 300 KILLED IN DARFUR ATTACKS AS SUDAN WAR NEARS TWO-YEAR MARK

UNITED NATIONS, 15 APRIL

More than 300 civilians were killed in two days of attacks by Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on camps in North Darfur, the UN reported Monday. The violence targeted famine-hit Zamzam and Abu Shorouk camps and El Fasher, the only Darfur state capital still under military control.

The RSF struck after the Sudanese army regained parts of Khartoum last month. Among the dead were 10 aid workers from Relief International. The UN also reported 60,000–80,000 families displaced in just 48 hours.

Sudan's civil war, which erupted on 15 April 2023, has killed over 24,000 people and triggered the world's worst humanitarian and displacement crisis, with nearly 13 million people forced to flee.

A donor conference in London on Tuesday, led by the UK, EU, Germany, and France, aims to raise support. The UN's $1.8 billion refugee appeal remains only 10 per cent funded. —*PTI*

GLOBAL LEGACY

NY City declares 14 April as Ambedkar Day

NEW YORK, 15 APRIL

New York City Mayor Eric Adams has proclaimed 14 April as Dr BR Ambedkar Day in New York City, with its 8.5 million residents celebrating the day, a top official in the mayor's office said.

Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs Dilip Chauhan made the announcement in the presence of Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr Ramdas Athawale, who delivered the keynote address at a special event organised at the UN headquarters on Monday to commemorate Dr Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary.

"A historic moment at the UN Headquarters in New York as Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary is officially proclaimed by the NYC Mayor's Office. My heartfelt thanks to Mayor @NYCMayor and Deputy Commissioner Dilip Chauhan for honouring Babasaheb's global legacy of justice and equality," Athawale posted on X along with photos and a video.

Born on 14 April, 1891, Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar was the chairman of the Constituent Assembly's most crucial Drafting Committee that earned him the moniker Architect of the Indian Constitution. He was also the Minister of Law and Justice in Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's first Cabinet post-Independence.

Ambedkar, who played a key role in social movements that fought for the rights of Dalits and untouchables, had received his PhD in Economics from Columbia University in 1927 and an honorary degree in 1952. —*PTI*

Dilip Chauhan and Ramdas Athawale at the declaration of the Dr BR Ambedkar Day at an event held in New York on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

US, Iran differ on venue as Khamenei endorses talks

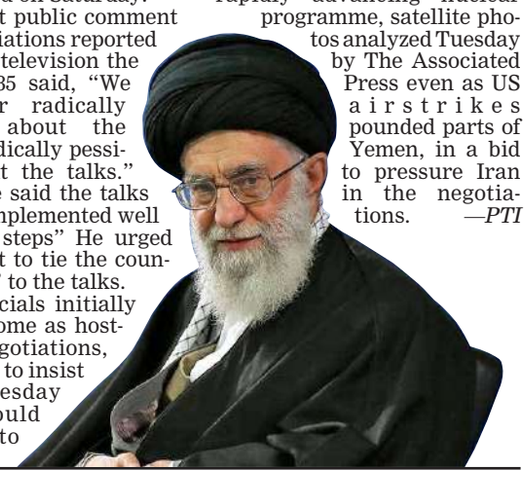
DUBAI, 15 APRIL

Iran supreme leader Ayotollah Ali Khamenei endorsed US–Iran talks even as the two sides differed on the venue for the next round of talks which are scheduled on Saturday.

In his first public comment on the negotiations reported by the state television the Khamenei, 85 said, "We are neither radically optimistic about the talks nor radically pessimistic about the talks." However, he said the talks had been "implemented well in the first steps" He urged officials "not to tie the country's affairs" to the talks.

Italian officials initially identified Rome as hosting the negotiations, only for Iran to insist early Tuesday they would return to Oman. American officials so far haven't commented on it.

A second US aircraft carrier is operating in Mideast waters ahead of the next round of talks between Iran and the United States over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, satellite photos analyzed Tuesday by The Associated Press even as US airstrikes pounded parts of Yemen, in a bid to pressure Iran in the negotiations. —*PTI*



Rupee jumps 33P to settle at 85.77 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 15 APRIL

Rising for the second straight session, rupee jumped 33 paise to end at 85.77 (provisional) against US dollar on Tuesday due to a sharp rise in equity markets and continuing weakness in the American currency amid global uncertainties. Besides, lower global crude prices, favourable domestic inflation numbers and the US administration's latest move to suspend the additional 26 per cent tariffs on India till 9 July also supported the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.85, the day's lowest level, and touched the intra-day peak of 85.59 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.77 (provisional against the dollar, registering a gain of 33 paise over the previous closing level *—PTI*

AstraZeneca loses marketing permit for cancer drug

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

AstraZeneca Pharma India Ltd on Tuesday said it has surrendered the marketing authorisation of prostate cancer treatment drug Olaparib (Lynparza) 100mg and 150mg in India citing commercial reasons. The company had received marketing authorisation for Olaparib film-coated tablets 100mg and 150mg (Lynparza) on 17 November, 2023, AstraZeneca Pharma India said in a regulatory filing. It has now surrendered the marketing authorisation of the indication of Olaparib (Lynparza) 100mg and 150mg, the filing added. The drug is indicated in combination with Abiraterone and Prednisone or Prednisolone for the treatment of adult patients with metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer, AstraZeneca Pharma India said, adding, it continues "to hold all other existing permissions for the said drug Olaparib in India". *—PTI*

Rio Innobev secures Rs 10 cr in pre-series round

MUMBAI, 15 APRIL

Pune-based beverage startup Rio Innobev said it secured Rs 10 crore in pre-series A funding round led by Atomic Capital and other investors on Tuesday. The fresh funds will be channelled into four growth pillars, which include distribution expansion, brand building, product innovation, and manufacturing upgrades, the company said. The company aims to expand its portfolio across indulgence, health, and functional beverage segments, catering to evolving consumer preferences. The company currently has a presence in over 35,000 retail stores across over 25 cities in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Founded in 2014, Rio Innobev claims to have remained EBITDA positive, growing from 7.5 lakh units in its first year to over 15 million cans and bottles sold annually *—PTI*

Nearly 20 premium malls to open by 2026: C&W

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Nearly 20 premium shopping malls, encompassing 123 lakh square feet of retail space, are slated to open by the end of 2026 across eight major Indian cities. As highlighted in a report by real estate consultant Cushman & Wakefield, titled "Premiumisation of India's Retail Sector - Upscaling, Upgrading and Evolving", was unveiled at the MAPIC India Summit. The upcoming malls, comprising 19 Grade A developments, are expected to significantly enhance retail offerings in cities including Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and Ahmedabad. Notably, 8.6 million square feet of this space will be classified as superior Grade (Grade A-plus). Saurabh Shatdal, Executive Managing Director at Cushman & Wakefield, remarked that India's retail landscape is rapidly evolving, reflecting changing consumer aspirations. *—PTI*

Mkts rise over 2% amid relaxed tariffs

Sensex jumps 1,577.63 pts, Nifty by 500

MUMBAI, 15 APRIL

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty surged over two per cent, tracking a rally in global markets after US relaxed some of the tariffs on Tuesday.

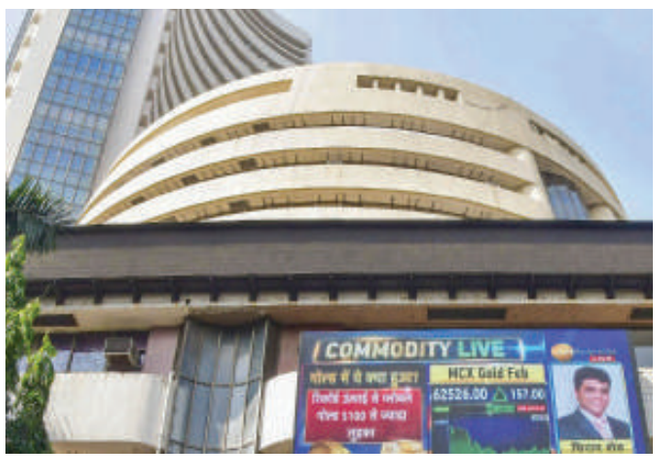
The US President Donald Trump relaxed tariffs on electronics products and hinted at duty revision for automobiles.

Rallying for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,577.63 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 76,734.89. During the day, it zoomed 1,750.37 points or 2.32 per cent to 76,907.63, driven by the across-the-board rally.

The NSE Nifty surged 500 points or 2.19 per cent to 23,328.55. Intra-day, it rallied 539.8 points or 2.36 per cent to 23,368.35. The key indices have recovered almost all the losses induced by Trump's reciprocal tariffs announced on 2 April.

All the BSE sectoral indices closed in green. BSE Realty, Auto, Capital Goods and Industrials were lead gainers, jumping up to five per cent.

IndusInd Bank was the lead gainer among Sensex shares, surging by 6.84 per cent. Tata Motors rallied 4.50 per cent.



US President Donald Trump relaxed tariffs on electronics products and hinted at duty revision for automobiles **PHOTO: PTI**

Larsen & Toubro, Axis Bank, Adani Ports, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and HCL Tech were also among the gainers.

ITC and Hindustan Unilever were the only laggards. Donald Trump has suggested that he might temporarily exempt the auto industry from tariffs that were imposed earlier.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index, Tokyo's Nikkei 225, Shanghai SSE Composite and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in the positive territory. Markets in Europe were trading with gains. US markets ended higher on Monday. Trump said he was temporarily exempting smartphones, computers and other electronics items from his tariffs.

Meanwhile, wholesale price inflation eased to 2.05 per cent in March, against 2.38 per cent in February, government data showed on Tuesday. *—PTI*

CHINA, JAPAN TO SUFFER TOO

S&P: India to lose growth by 0.2-0.4% if tariffs enforced

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Major economies in the Asia-Pacific region, including India, China, and Japan, could experience a reduction in growth by 0.2 to 0.4 percentage points over the next two years.

If the United States enforces the reciprocal tariffs announced on 2 April, according to S&P Global Ratings.

The credit rating agency highlighted that the anticipated tariffs would adversely impact global trade and confidence, significantly affecting nations that rely on exports to both China and the US, particularly manufacturers and smaller economies.

Eunice Tan, Asia-Pacific Head of Research at S&P Global Ratings, warned, "Should these tariffs resume for economies outside China, the geopolitical and economic ramifications will be profound."

Previously, S&P projected India's growth at 6.5 per cent for 2025 and 6.8 per cent for 2026. However, with the implementation of the announced tariffs, these figures could decline to 6.3 per cent and 6.5 per cent, respectively.

Following the unsettling market reaction to the tariffs, President Trump postponed their implementation by three months, though a 10 per cent additional duty on US-bound exports remains in effect.

S&P further noted that if the tariffs are fully enacted, China's mainland, Japan, and India will see a decline in growth. Meanwhile, countries like Vietnam, Thailand, and Taiwan could suffer the most significant impacts.

"The ongoing trade conflict marks a severe escalation in US-China relations," S&P stated, emphasising potential for further deterioration in business confidence and volatility in financial markets, which could lead to a sharper global economic slowdown. *—PTI*

India better positioned against Trump's tariffs: ITC Head

ITC Chairman Sanjiv Puri expressed confidence that India is well-positioned to manage the disruptions arising from President Trump's tariffs. While acknowledging the challenges presented by reciprocal tariffs, Puri noted ongoing discussions for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the US, alongside potential FTAs with the EU and UK. Puri highlighted that, despite potential short-term uncertainties for India's consumption-driven economy, the company's strategy focuses on diversifying its portfolio, investing in sustainability, and adapting to rapid changes *—PTI*

Tech transforms Indian travel trends in 2025

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

According to the American Express 2025 Global Travel Trends Report, Indian travellers are increasingly focusing on unique experiences, value, and intentional planning for their travel in 2025.

The influence of technology on travel planning continues to grow, shaping how individuals approach their journeys.

The report indicates a strong inclination among Indians towards meaningful purchases and supporting local businesses. An impressive 92 per cent of respondents seek distinctive souvenirs to commemorate their trips, while 84 per cent prioritise patronising small local enterprises. High-quality local products are deemed essential by 81 per cent, and half of the respondents are intentionally planning international trips for luxury purchases.

Events significantly influence travel decisions, with 58 per cent of individuals planning trips around concerts or shows and 68 per cent for sporting events, particularly cricket and football.

Sanjay Khanna, CEO and Country Manager of American Express Banking Corp India, commented, "Indians are more informed and discerning than ever before, seeking holistic experiences during their travels. At American Express, we recognise the preferences of our Card Members and are devoted to helping them unlock greater value from travel, dining, shopping, and entertainment."

The report also reveals that 79 per cent of Indians are using reward points for travel, with 84 per cent integrating credit card rewards with other loyalty programmes. Furthermore, 79 per cent are downloading travel apps, and nearly half are booking their trips via smartphones. *—ANI*

PRICES UP BY RS 50

Gold reclaims all-time high of ₹ 96,450 per 10 grams

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Gold prices rose by Rs 50 to revisit the all-time high level of Rs 96,450 per 10g in the national capital on Tuesday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

On Monday, gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell by Rs 50 to settle at Rs 96,400 per 10g.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased Rs 50 to reclaim its all-time high level of Rs 96,000 per 10g against the previous close of Rs 95,950 per 10g.

Meanwhile, silver prices climbed by Rs 2,500 to Rs 97,500 per kg on the back of fresh industrial demand.

Silver had declined by Rs 500 to close at Rs 95,000 per kg on Monday. Globally, spot gold appreciated by USD 13.67 or 0.43 per cent to USD 3,224.60 per ounce. Also, Comex gold futures for June delivery went up 0.47 per cent to USD 3,241.50 per ounce. The US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's upcoming press conference on Wednesday will be in focus, with investors seeking signals on how the central bank may respond if trade tensions intensify or economic conditions weaken, Mehta added. Spot silver in the Asian market hours fell marginally at USD 32.32 per ounce. *—PTI*

On Monday, gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell by Rs 50 to settle at Rs 96,400 per 10g **PHOTO:PTI**

Delhi airport's T1 faces glitch, T2 shut for repair

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Delhi Airport's Terminal 1 faced a temporary technical issue during check-in on Tuesday, coinciding with the temporary transfer of all operations from Terminal 2, which is undergoing maintenance.

The airport operator, Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), reported the disruption on social media, stating, "We experienced a technical issue at T1 check-in. Our team, along with stakeholders, are resolving it and operations are normalising. We regret the inconvenience caused."

An official noted that the issue was related to the baggage belt and was quickly rectified.

IndiGo, one of the airlines affected by the glitch, alerted passengers via a social media post at 11:51 hours, advising that due to a temporary baggage belt failure at Terminal 1, they might experience slightly longer wait times during check-in and baggage collection upon arrival.

Currently, both Terminal 1 and Terminal 3 remain operational at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA). With a capacity of 40 million passengers annually, T1 has been expanded to accommodate the additional load, as T2, which has served the airport for nearly 40 years, has limited capacity of 15 million passengers per year. *—PTI*

Karnataka, Bavaria sign MoU to collaborate for AI, smart cities

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

The Karnataka government and the German state of Bavaria signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tuesday to collaborate in key areas, including Artificial Intelligence, quantum technology, biotechnology, Smart Cities, higher education, and sustainable agriculture, among others.

The MoU was signed by Karnataka's Minister for Large and Medium Industries, MB Patil, and Dr Florian Herrmann, Head of the Bavarian State Chancellery.

Karnataka's Minister for IT/BT, Priyank Kharge, was also present at the event.Speaking on the occasion, Minister Patil stated that the agreement will remain in effect for five years.

As part of the collaboration, the two regions will work together in sectors such as Industry 4.0, space technology, medical technology, green tech, urban infrastructure, skill development, employment generation, entrepreneurship, and cybersecurity, he added.

The discussion also included the formation of working groups focused on specific areas, such as skill development, the minister said. *—PTI*

Karnataka Industries Minister MB Patil with Head of Bavarian State Chancellery Florian Herrmann **PHOTO: INSTAGRAM @NIMMAMBP**

SUGARCANE PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY

Assam gets world's first boiler-less sugarcane plant

LANKA, 15 APRIL

A revolutionary boiler-less sugarcane processing technology, claimed to be the world's first, has reached commercial viability at a plant in Assam, according to its developers. Four years since its installation at Eco Tech Agro Mills in Hojai district, the technology allows for jaggery production from sugarcane juice without burning residual biomass.

Developed by Spray Engineering Devices Ltd (SEDL), the Low Temperature-Evaporation (LTE) system operates entirely without a boiler, making the plant fuel-free and significantly reducing its environmental impact. The facility has also integrated solar power and recycles all recovered water for irrigation.

SEDL Managing Director Vivek Verma highlighted the project's challenges, such as heat balancing, and noted strong support from local industry. With an investment of Rs 50-60 crore, the plant recorded a turnover of approximately Rs 30 crore in its first three years and aims to break even this year.

Promoter Pradeep Jain mentioned that the plant currently operates at 40 per cent capacity due to sugarcane shortages, yet they are advocating for improved farming techniques among local growers. *—PTI*

IN BENGALURU & 15 CITIES

Blinkit to deliver Airtel SIM cards in 10 mins

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Bharti Airtel announced its partnership with quick commerce platform Blinkit for the delivery of SIM cards to its customers within ten minutes on Tuesday.

In the initial phase of this launch, the SIM delivery service will be available across 16 major cities, including Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Sonipat, Ahmedabad, Surat, Chennai, Bhopal, Indore, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Lucknow, Jaipur, Kolkata, and Hyderabad.

There are plans to add more cities and towns over a period of time, according to a release.

"This collaboration marks a significant milestone enabling, as it does, customers to receive SIM cards at their doorstep in a minimal 10 minutes at a nominal convenience fee of Rs 49," it said.

After the delivery of the SIM card, customers can activate the number using Aadhaar-based KYC authentication, as per stipulated process.

Customers will have the option to choose from both postpaid and prepaid plans or trigger a mobile number portability for porting into the Airtel network.

The release explained that in order to streamline the process, customers can access the online link and view the activation video for a seamless activation experience.

Additionally, for all such activations, Airtel customers have the option to access the help centre through the Airtel Thanks App for any assistance. Post-delivery of the SIM card, it will be mandatory for customers to activate the SIM within a 15-day window to ensure a smooth and hassle-free transition. *—PTI*

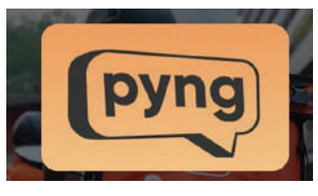
After the delivery of the SIM card, customers can activate the number using Aadhaar-based KYC authentication **PHOTO: AI**

Swiggy launches 'Pyng' for professional services

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Swiggy announced the launch of Pyng, an AI-driven platform for users to access professionals across specialisations like health and wellness, astrologers, event planners and skill trainers on Tuesday. The launch marks Swiggy's entry into the growing professional services market. Pyng had launched its seller app earlier this year. Nandan Reddy, Co-founder and Head of Innovation at Swiggy, said, "As our lives become increasingly fast-paced, the demand for professional assistance -- from tax planners and counsellors to yoga trainers -- is growing across both personal and professional spheres. With Pyng, we're offering a reliable, spam-free platform where users can connect with trusted experts."

Pyng is currently live for users in Bengaluru *—PTI*



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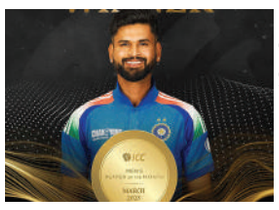


PHOTO: PTI

Shreyas Iyer wins ICC Men's Player of Month award

DUBAI, 15 APRIL

Stylish Indian batter Shreyas Iyer on Tuesday secured the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for March after playing a stellar role in India's Champions Trophy triumph. Iyer finished as the highest run-scorer with 243 runs during the ODI event to win the honour, overcoming competition from New Zealand's Jacob Duffy and Rachin Ravindra. "I'm truly honored to be named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for March. This recognition is incredibly special, especially in a month where we lifted the ICC Champions Trophy, a moment I will cherish forever," Iyer said in an ICC release.—*PTI*

TVS Racing gears up for a thrilling 2025

SINGAPORE, 15 APRIL

TVS Racing is set to elevate the 2025 Idemitsu FIM Asia Road Racing Championship (ARRC) by bringing a diverse set of top racers from across the globe, making the competition more intense than ever. Following three successful seasons, Season 4 of the TVS Asia One Make Championship is poised to push the limits of both rider skill and machine performance. The championship will kick off at Thailand's Chang International Circuit between 25 & 27 April, marking the beginning of an action-packed six-round season. The 2025 season will also feature a race-optimized TVS Apache RR 310, engineered for superior performance, ensuring riders stay at the forefront of competitive racing.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Jenkins quits as Commonwealth Sport President

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Chris Jenkins has resigned as Commonwealth Sport President, the organisation announced on Tuesday, acknowledging his long-standing service and significant contribution to the Commonwealth Sport movement. The Constitution allows for an interim President to be appointed in the wake of mid-term resignation of the incumbent, and Donald Rukare has been given the role till the next General Assembly in November this year, according to Commonwealth Sport CEO Katie Sadleir.—*PTI*

McTominay scores twice as Napoli beats Empoli

NAPLES, 15 APRIL

A double from Scott McTominay and one from Romelu Lukaku gave Napoli a 3-0 win over Empoli and cut Inter Milan's lead in Serie A to three points. Scotland international McTominay has been one of the stars of the season for Napoli, and he put the home side ahead after 18 minutes when he gathered the ball just inside the Empoli half, drove forward, and unleashed a low drive that whizzed into the corner from 25 meters out. Lukaku made it 2-0 early in the second half when he found space in a crowded box and gave the goalkeeper no chance from close range. McTominay's closer was a delightful looped header five minutes later.—*PTI*

Delhi seek first win at 'first home' against Rajasthan

Axar Patel-led Capitals looked like a well-oiled machine

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Jolted by a dramatic loss at home after a dream start to the season, Delhi Capitals will put the setback behind them when they take on a faltering Rajasthan Royals in the IPL here on Wednesday.

Riding high on a four-match winning streak, the Axar Patel-led Capitals looked like a well-oiled machine before a stunning batting meltdown against the Mumbai Indians halted their momentum here on Sunday. What was meant to be a triumphant return to base ended in despair as the loss saw them slip to second on the points table. In contrast, the Rajasthan Royals find themselves in a precarious position with just two wins from six matches, languishing at eighth. Their season has been marred by inconsistency.

Impact substitute Karun Nair, fresh off a prolific domestic season, led Delhi's chase against MI with a dazzling 89 in pursuit of 206 in their first game at the Feroz Shah Kotla this season. At 119/1 in 10 overs, the match looked all but sealed. But a jaw-dropping collapse followed, which included three run-outs in the penultimate over. DC were eventually bowled out for 193 in a chase of 205. —*PTI*

DC VS RR

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	29
RR Won:	15
DC Won:	14

DC vs RR Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Delhi Capitals will take on Rajasthan Royals PHOTO: PTI

"We need to play on better Chepauk surface that give batters confidence"

-MS Dhoni, Captain Chennai Super Kings

"Rohit Sharma's poor run of form hasn't allowed Mumbai Indians to set the tone in the IPL so far"

-Anjum Chopra, former Indian women's captain

'Pant had some plans in mind'

Lucknow Super Giants leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi is not quite sure why he didn't get to bowl at the death against CSK despite a fine spell, but backed his captain Rishabh Pant's decision, saying as a skipper, "he had some plans in mind."

Pant had opted for pace over spin at the death when MS Dhoni joined Shivam Dube (43) in the middle with CSK needing 56 off the last 30 balls. The decision backfired as Dhoni blasted 26 off 11 balls as CSK achieved the victory target of 167 with three balls to spare. "I didn't talk (to Pant) about it. I came to the wicket twice, but maybe he had some plans.

SUDIRMAN CUP FINALS

Sindhu, Sen to lead India; Satwik-Chirag return after injury

NEW DELHI, 15 APRIL

Double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu and world No. 18 Lakshya Sen will spearhead the Indian challenge at the Sudirman Cup Finals to be held in Xiamen, China, from 27 April to 4 May, the national federation announced on Tuesday.

India, which qualified for the prestigious mixed team championships based on their overall world ranking, has been clubbed in a challenging Group D alongside former champions Indonesia, two-time runners-up Denmark, and a strong English outfit. The 14-member Indian contingent will see the return of the formidable men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after an injury break, while the country's top-ranked women's doubles pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly will miss the event due to injury-related issues. In their absence, the young combination of Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra will shoulder the responsibility in the women's doubles event, while the young pairing of Hariharan Amsakarunan and Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi has been named as backup for Satwik and Chirag in the men's doubles. "The selectors have picked the best possible combination in all five categories despite some injury worries."

P V Sindhu

Gayatri-Treesa pair misses out due to injury

The women's doubles pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly will miss out due to injury, It has been learnt that both Treesa and Gayatri, currently ranked 10th in the world, are recuperating from shoulder issues attributed to a packed schedule last year. The duo has already featured in five tournaments this season, adding to the 22 events they contested in 2024. —*PTI*

Advani reaches final of World Billiards C'ship

CARLOW, 15 APRIL

India's ace cueist Pankaj Advani has reached the finals of the IBSF World Billiards Championship, beating compatriot Dhurv Sitwala here.

He defeated Sitwala 1070-300 in a two-and-a-half-hour semifinal. Sitwala took the initial lead with a break of 63, but from then on it was Advani's show. Firing in back-to-back breaks of 173 and 205, the multiple world champion created a staggering 400-point lead.

With breaks of 64 and 65, Sitwala could only admire when his opponent and dear friend was at the table, playing effortless billiards as he continued to score breaks of 117, 100, 96, 166, 53, and 74 to confirm his berth in the final.

Advani is aiming to not only defend his world title, but this will also mark a decade of remaining undefeated in the World Billiards Championships since 2016.

The other semifinal will be between India's Sourav Kothari and England's David Causier. —*PTI*

India's ace cueist Pankaj Advani PHOTO: PTI

BARCELONA OPEN 2025

Ruud, Tsitsipas bid in quest to halt further ranking slides

BARCELONA, 15 APRIL

Casper Ruud and Stefanos Tsitsipas faced off in last year's Barcelona Open Banc Sabadell final a week after the Greek took their championship clash in Monte Carlo.

Things are a little different 12 months later, with both coming in off the back of less-than-ideal starts to their clay season.

On Tuesday, each opened their campaigns. Defending champion Ruud defeated qualifier Daniel Elahi Galan, 6-4, 6-3, as the No. 2 seed did not face a break point throughout the contest.

As for Tsitsipas, he fell eight spots to No. 16 and began the week at No. 19 in the live rankings. The 26-year-old blew past Reilly Opelka, 6-2, 6-2, to confidently launch his campaign. Another American opponent, Sebastian Korda, awaits with a quarterfinal spot at stake.

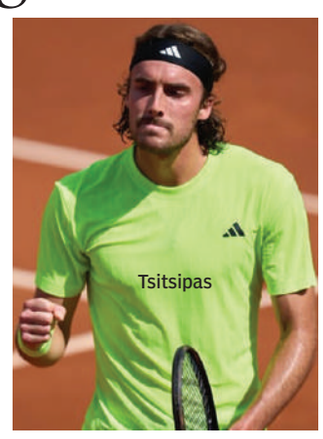
In Monte Carlo, Ruud missed two match points during his round-of-16 loss to Alexei Popyrin, and Tsitsipas suffered his first defeat in six meetings with Lorenzo Musetti following a quarterfinal exit.

The two now seek strong showings in Barcelona ahead of the upcoming pair of ATP Masters 1000 events to ensure their rankings don't continue trending in the wrong direction ahead of the all-important French Open seeding.

The Norwegian is down to No. 10 in the latest rankings, and an early departure this week could see him drop outside of the Top 15, depending on the results of his peers in Spain and at Munich's BMW Open.

A meeting with Hamad Medjedovic stands as Ruud's next challenge. —*PTI*

Casper Ruud



Tsitsipas

LIVE FIRECRACKER HURLED AT FANS DURING ISL FINAL

BENGALURU, 15 APRIL

Bengaluru Football Club on Tuesday claimed that its owner Parth Jindal suffered "burns and bruises" in a cowardly attack by a section of home fans on travelling supporters during the Indian Super League final against Mohun Bagan Super Giant, last week.

The club said a live firecracker was hurled into the stands, and a BFC supporter sustained an eye injury during the incident.

The Blues, who lost the summit clash 1-2 in the extra time, said it has filed a formal complaint with the All India Football Federation (AIFF)."Bengaluru FC strongly condemns the reckless and cowardly attack on our travelling supporters by a section of the home fans, where a live firecracker was hurled into the stands during the ISL final against Mohun Bagan Super Giant in Kolkata on Saturday."

The incident resulted in a BFC supporter sustaining an injury to the eye that required treatment, while other supporters, including club owner Parth Jindal, suffered burns and bruises," the BFC said in a strongly-worded post on 'X'.The club also urged the AIFF and the ISL organisers, FSDL, to take strong action to ensure fans' safety in stadiums."Such actions not only endanger lives but go against the very spirit of our beautiful game. —*PTI*

CONCERNS MOUNT AT RED BULL AFTER VERSTAPPEN'S 'CATASTROPHE' AS F1 HEADS TO SAUDI ARABIA

BAHRAIN, 15 APRIL

Max Verstappen and Red Bull are one of Formula 1's all-time most successful partnerships. But a disastrous race has raised concerns that Verstappen could consider a move elsewhere.

Following the Bahrain Grand Prix, Verstappen talked of a "catastrophe" as he listed the problems.

The defending world champion had to cope with tires overheating, brake problems and two different pit stop delays. At one stage, he was briefly last before finishing sixth.

Why might Verstappen's future be in question? Red Bull's influential motorsport adviser Helmut Marko has previously indicated there's a performance-related clause in Verstappen's contract, which is officially dated to 2028.

The specifics aren't public, but Marko indicated to the BBC last month that a clause could come into play "if we don't deliver for Max."Red Bull seemed to have the fourth-fastest car in Bahrain, behind McLaren, Ferrari, and Mercedes.

He "liked" an Instagram post by ex-F1 driver Giedo van der Garde, which suggested it was a "panic move" to replace Liam Lawson as his teammate after two races of the season.Where could Verstappen go ? Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff expressed interest in a potential move last year. Verstappen has hinted at leaving F1 someday, saying last year he'd "passed halfway for sure" in his career and dislikes the busy schedule. —*PTI*

Mechanics push Red Bull driver Max of the Netherlands on the starting grid before the Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix, in Sakhir PHOTO: X/1 RACING

PREMIER LEAGUE

First-minute goal helps Bournemouth beat Fulham

BOURNEMOUTH, 15 APRIL

Bournemouth beat Fulham 1-0 at home in the Premier League on Monday and snapped a six-game winless run.

Antoine Semenyo scored the goal in the first minute. The Ghanaian international took a pass from Alex Scott, surged to the edge of the box, and curled in a left-foot shot.

Semenyo's first goal in nine games lifted the Cherries above Fulham and into eighth place, keeping alive their hopes of a European place next season.

"As soon as I got it, I knew I had space 1-v-1," Semenyo said of his early strike. "I wanted to shift him to one side, hopefully get on the left comfortably, and pass it in the net. I feel like I've been in that position, hit it hard, and it's gone over the bar. I knew when I went past him, I just wanted to pass it into the corner. —*PTI*

Fulham's Adama Traore, left, and Bournemouth's Dango Ouattara battle for the ball during the English Premier League PHOTO: X / @FULHAMFC

Mbappe leads comeback charge against Arsenal

Kylian Mbappe joined Real Madrid in search of Champions League glory, hoping to be on the right side of exactly the kind of magical night they need against Arsenal on Wednesday if they are to progress to the semi-finals. The Gunners lead 3-0 after dismantling the holders in London last week in the quarter-final first leg.

Alvarez scores penalty double as Atletico win over Valladolid

MADRID, 15 APRIL

Julian Alvarez scored two penalties as Atletico Madrid came from behind to beat bottom club Valladolid 4-2 on Monday and keep alive its slim chances of winning La Liga.

Valladolid lost 10 of its previous 11 games, conceding 32 goals along the way, but it took a shock lead after 20 minutes when Mamadou Sylla converted from the penalty spot.

Alvarez levelled four minutes later from another penalty after Giuliano Simeone was brought down in the box. Simeone put the home side in front with a nice individual goal three minutes later.

Javi Sanchez got an equalizer 10 minutes into the second half when his free kick took a deflection that wrongfooted Jan Oblak in the Atletico goal.

Alvarez scored a second penalty, and Alexander Sorloth made it 4-2 11 minutes from time when he slotted a shot that the goalkeeper could only parry at his feet. —*PTI*

Julian Alvarez